

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Arthur Harris**

Arthur Harris was born in 1916. His father was Harry Noble Harris from Honolulu; his mother, Louisa Cathcart, was originally from Hana, Maui. Harris grew up on his mother's family's property in Kalihi, O'ahu.

Harris attended Kalihi-Waena Elementary, Kalākaua Intermediate, and Kamehameha schools. While a junior at Kamehameha, he served as a "spare" for the second Panalā'au expedition during June of 1935. Three months later, he returned to the Line Islands as part of a scientific expedition led by Dr. Dana Coman of the Johns Hopkins University. Aboard the two-masted vessel *Kinkajou*, Harris sailed throughout the Pacific, and eventually became a colonist on Baker Island.

After leaving Kamehameha in 1937, Harris attended the University of Hawai'i. A year later, he began a twenty-five-year career with the Honolulu Police Department, which was interrupted during World War II by a stint with the U.S. Merchant Marines.

At the time of the interviews, Harris was still operating his own successful business, manufacturing rugs and ceramics.

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: George H. Kahanu, Sr.**

George Hawae Kahanu, Sr. was born in 1917 in Kalihi, O'ahu. The family lived on Gulick Avenue. His father, George Kealoha Kahanu, was a pure Hawaiian from Kipahulu, Maui; his mother, Florence Akona Goo, was Hawaiian-Chinese from Kohala, Hawai'i.

Kahanu attended Kalihi-Waena Elementary and Kalākaua Intermediate schools before entering the Kamehameha Schools for grades nine through twelve.

During his junior year at Kamehameha, Kahanu was recruited to participate in the Panalā'au project as a "spare" (or alternate) for the fourth expedition. The following year, during the summer of 1936, he again was a part of the colonization project, spending two months on Jarvis along with Henry Ahia, Hartwell Blake, and Frederick Lee.

After graduating from Kamehameha in 1937, Kahanu worked for Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company, the Kamehameha Schools' maintenance department, E. E. Black, Ltd., and Pacific Bridge Company. In 1940, he began his career with Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, a career that was interrupted for two years by military service. After retiring from Pearl Harbor in 1974, Kahanu worked for six years as a supervisor at Pacific Marine Company.

Kahanu moved to Maui in 1980 with his second wife, Beatrice Cockett, a Maui native. Previously, Kahanu, since 1938, was married to Ellen Stewart, a descendant of the Poepoe family of Honolulu. They raised three children: George Jr., Ellen, and Kehaulani.

Tape Nos. 38-8-2-02 and 38-9-2-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

George Kahanu, Sr. (GK)

Kū‘au, Maui

April 19, 2002

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Ty Tengan (TT)

WN: This is an interview with George Kahanu for the Panalā‘au oral history project on April 19, 2002. We’re at his home in Kū‘au, Maui. The interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Ty Tengan.

GK: So, where you want to start?

WN: We want to start with when and where you were born.

GK: Oh, okay. I was born on 908 Gulick Avenue in Kalihi—that was within the first block of King Street, King Street was the main street through Kalihi—in 1917. So that makes me eighty-four now, right? I’m looking at my different classmates and some of them in such bad shape, I’m just wondering, you know, I’ve been so fortunate to live this long and enjoy so many things. But, in those days in Kamehameha, I think a lot of my qualities, I think I got from my dad because my dad was a real religious person and he was a kind of a Hawaiian doctor, a spiritual doctor. I had an aunt who was Luca Kinolau, who was a herbal doctor—*kahuna lapa’au*. Between the two of them, if you had something wrong with you, if you went to see my aunt, and if she could take care of you, she would give you the herbal treatments, whatever’s needed. But if it was something beyond that, something that involved spiritual, they would refer to my dad. No matter what you say about whether it was any benefit or anything, I was able to witness the benefits from either one. In fact—well, later on I’ll say it. So as a result of that, my dad always used to preach that whatever you want, you go out and you work for it. Don’t try to get it through whatever means from anybody else. If you want fruits, plant the fruits in your own yard, so you don’t have to go out and get it from anybody. And then he was a very religious person, so he was part of the Mormon organization. We used to walk from where we were, Gulick Avenue, up to the Mormon [i.e., Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints] Church in Kalihi. But, when I grew up to be old enough to play, I would play more than going to church. I mean, I was more interested in playing, anyway.

WN: This is on Beckley Street?

GK: Yeah, the church is on Beckley Street. Right, okay, you're familiar with Kalihi then. And, Kalihi Waena School was across the park, up there. It's still there. I lived down Gulick Avenue, so I used to walk Gulick up to school. And then, after I graduated or finished Kalihi Waena School, I went to Kalākaua [Intermediate School]. From Kalākaua now—when you went to Kalākaua those days, we always had contentions between Kalihi and Pālama kids. I mean, the toughies, you know. So, we had a Dr. James Mitchell. He wasn't a doctor, he was an athletic director. He was aware of these things going on between the boys, and so he would say, "Well, okay, on Thursday, all you boys bring in old clothes. We're going to play football." We played tackle football, and it would be the Kalihi boys on one side—Kalihi Uka and Kalihi Kai—versus the Pālama gang, Pālama boys. And, when you tackle and everything, in the huddle, everybody piles on and everybody's underneath just giving 'em.

(Laughter)

So, you know it'd be more or less a fight. That's what it was, see. Lucky not too many people got bloodied, but in the final analysis, you got to respect one another, and you got to know who the leaders were, who the tough guys were. After that, we're all good friends because we had to attend the same classes and stuff.

Those days, the teachers [at Kalākaua Intermediate School] were pretty smart. They knew their business. Then like I said, came to my ninth-grade year, I got this message from Mrs. Amy Awai, my music teacher. She wanted to talk with me. So I went to see her, and I said, "Yes, here I am," and what's the story.

She says, "You know, tomorrow, Saturday, the Kamehameha Schools are having a couple of teachers come down here and interview boys to go to Kamehameha Schools."

Now, I never had any intentions of going to Kamehameha. I had this good friend of mine, Dr. Chung, who lived down the road and I always admired him, whatever he did. From Kalākaua he went to vocational school and from vocational school he went to the University [of Hawai'i]. Then, I think after two years he applied to the medical school at Marquette and he went through the medical school. So I thought, that's the way I want to go. From there I wanted to go vocational, and then go university, and go meet him up on the Mainland. I thought, I had ability. So, Mrs. Awai called me in, "You know, this is what's going to happen."

I says, "You know, Mrs. Awai, I'm not interested in going to Kamehameha."

She says, "You know, you're Hawaiian. You got to go to Kamehameha."

I said, "I don't want to go to Kamehameha."

She says, "Look, tomorrow you better be here. If I find Monday that you didn't attend the interview, you're going to get it from me."

So I says, well, you know, no problem. I could go and I can always. . . . It's up to me. So I did attend the interview. From Kalākaua there were about eight of us. One of those was Albert Akana. He made the trip down to one of the (islands). Then there was Jacob Haili and—anyway, about eight of us. And so, when I got the notice I was accepted to go to Kamehameha, of course, my parents were real happy about it. Now I'm out of the home and I'm at Kamehameha School and that was right up the block really, a couple of blocks from Kalihi.

So I did attend Kamehameha Schools, and I think I did well. I did real well at Kamehameha. I enjoyed the sports that there was up there and the lifestyle, living with different boys, you know. In those days, I would say, Kamehameha, if you talk about *'ohana*, it was a real family situation. And not only that, it was a full military school. On the campus, we had an officer and a sergeant. And every day we would wear the uniform. In fact, school, we had the regular khakis, and then after school we had working clothes, and then Sundays when we had parade, we had something like the West Point uniform, we had that, too. Because of that, you got to wear the uniform with pride. When you wore the uniform, and you went in town, you know, you felt like you represented something. And being Hawaiians, you know, it was something to be proud of.

One day when I got called by Dr. [Homer] Barnes to attend the—he wanted to see me. I went in. Of course, prior to this, we had heard that there was this project going on. They were selecting graduates. At the beginning, it was Kamehameha School graduates first, and they were having this project going down these islands. I thought, well, it sounded interesting, but we in school were not involved at that time. When I got this call from the principal, Dr. Barnes, and I went in and he had told me, "We are going to select a couple of students from school to go down on a project." And I thought, wow, this is great. He said, "Would you be interested?"

I said, "No question about being interested." I thought, gee, this is something. Adventure, you know, really. I mean, young man, you know. Wouldn't you want to go to? Sure, you would want to go. So, there was no question. I was the one selected from my class and I was a junior at that time. So, really, throughout this project, I think I was the youngest one to go on this at the very beginning. The other person that was selected, he was a senior, was Jimmy [James L.] Carroll. I think you've spoken to Jimmy. So, Jimmy and I were selected to go.

But at that time, the project was just about in the final year of being in operation. I think at that time one of the requirements, and that was told to us, was that in order for the U.S. government to claim ownership, it had to colonize, settle the island for one year. I think originally the U.S. had it and over a period of time they gave up. So now, it's a matter of reclaiming the islands, so they had to settle it for one year. So we were going down at about the tail end of that year, and so when we went down, some of the boys, some of the men who had been on there earlier, got off. And then they were replaced by other people.

I wasn't selected to be on the island. What happened, I was fortunate to go and make the trip all the way down to Samoa. Before we left Honolulu, we had trustee John Clarke speak to us and he said that if we got a chance to get to Samoa, he would like us to go and visit the schools down there and stay in some of the villages to get that experience. I was looking forward to that. I thought, well, go all the way to Samoa. And you hear about—in those days, Samoa was just like people hearing about Hawai'i the first time. We made the islands, we stopped at Jarvis, and then came Howland and continued on to Swains Island. Swains Island, Jimmy Carroll and, I think, [Abraham] Pi'ianai'a got off and stayed at Swains Island. Swains Island is like, I think, within a hundred miles of Samoa, and it's owned by a single family. They had all these people living on the island. They were kind of restricted in terms of how many people could have on the island because of limitations of food and all that stuff. So I ended up going down to Samoa.

One of the things that happened when we got to Samoa, we got in on the tail end of a hurricane. And it was really something because, you know, around the coconut trees, the coconut trees had no leaves. The hurricane had stripped the coconut trees of all the leaves and lifted the corrugated iron from the roofs of the warehouses and wrapped them around the coconut trees like piece of paper. I mean, talk about devastation. I've never seen anything like that before, but that's the way it was. We were down there, really, the purpose for being there was that the ship, the *Itasca* needed to get fuel. And we had to get fuel from the Matson ship, the *Monterey*. At that time, the *Monterey* would leave here, go all the way down to New Zealand, Australia, make that route—and Samoa—and then come back up here. So, we had to wait about a month to get the fuel from the *Monterey*.

After a month down there—and I did go out and visit the villages. One of the hardships, as part of the agreement, we took some food with us to give to the villages. In other words, to pay for our compensation for our being with them. But, their style of living was different from—even though they're Polynesians—they're different from Hawaiians. The way they prepared foods in that they had like *imu*. *Imu* was above ground. We Hawaiians, we put *imu* under ground, and we had stones. With them, it was above ground, so when they cooked anything, it wasn't thoroughly cooked like we

Hawaiians cook things. It was like—well maybe that's the way they wanted it—it was partially cooked.

WN: What do you mean by above ground?

GK: You know, when you make the *imu*.

WN: No hole, then?

GK: They wouldn't dig a deep hole. Hawaiians, when we dig the *imu* we dig a deep hole, and then we line it with rocks. First, we put *kiaawe* wood and then we cover it with rocks. And then after the wood's burned, then you work it so that you level the rocks and you take off the unburned wood, and then you move the rocks around so it forms a leveled bed and that's about usually even with ground or below ground, slightly below. And then you cover with ti leaves, and banana leaves, and banana stumps. And then you put the pig and whatever, potatoes and taro and whatever, and then you cover with more leaves and then you cover with bag, gunnysack, and then you put dirt over it.

But with those people, they didn't do that. It was above ground. They built the fire above ground, and then not too much rocks. They would cover it with ti leaves and banana leaves. In the evening when they were ready for dinner, some of the food wasn't quite done. I think it was part of their method of cooking because they would do it the second time around and then they would really cook it fine. So, I mean, there was a method to what they were doing, how they did it. But one of the things that I was kind of not familiar with, you couldn't find ripe bananas. They had bananas, but as soon as the bananas were matured, green, they would stick it in the *imu*, in their *imu*. And then, they'd come out, you eat cooked bananas. But what I liked was the ripe bananas, and so that's one of the strange things about not being able to get fruits.

Anyway, we were there like a week out in the villages and then we came back on the ship. And the ship was in Pago Pago Harbor, and those of us who were on the ship, we had to become part of the crew as far as cleaning ship and setting up meals, that we were responsible to the officers on board ship. So in other words, we were living a military life.

Then the *Monterey* came in and we loaded up, we fueled it, we headed back, and we stopped at Swains Island, picked up Pi'ianai'a and (Kilarney Opiopio). And then we went to Baker. Now we're at the end of the year, so we taking everybody off the island. So Baker and Howland, the two islands, that really kind of in an area where the waves are pretty bad most of the time as compared to Jarvis. In Jarvis Island, we had a nice cove where the boat could come in right up to the beach almost, and it was really nice compared to the other islands. On Baker and Howland you had to stay outside the reef and then work your way in, walking in. So because of that, what we did, they left

everything on the island except the important weather instruments. Like the barometer, the anemometer, and one other instrument. But everything else was left on the island. The rationale was, okay, if a ship was out in this area and they needed food or anything, they could enjoy what was on the island.

WN: You mean, like canned goods and things like that.

GK: Yeah, all the canned goods and stuff. So the only thing that came off were the bodies, the four men, and these instruments because the weather was so bad. That was like about, I think, November, about that time of the year. So the ocean conditions were pretty bad. And then from there we went Howland, we picked off the boys at Howland. And then from there to Jarvis Island, and then we came back with everybody on board. Fortunately, everybody came back in good health. You don't know what to expect when people have no means of communicating and whatnot. So, everybody came back in good health. And when we came back, of course, Jimmy and I had to go back to school, Kamehameha School.

WN: So this is the tail end of the . . .

GK: The first year of the colonization of the islands.

WN: So what you were just talking about is after your Jarvis period?

GK: No, before.

WN: Oh, before?

GK: I was still in school yet. Oh, of course, the second trip I was still in school yet. See, that happened when we went down, I think that was about October. The first trip that I made, I was a junior and Jimmy was a senior. Then, the following summer, they talked about reactivating again. For whatever reasons they were going to do it. You know, they were going to go start up again. And at that time, they talked about, there was a race between the British and the United States about getting back to the islands. So what they did, then at that time they asked boys who were in summers—students who were on summer vacation—if they wanted to go down. So, of course, I wanted to go down, and I went down. This was a second group really, the second start-up. See, the first year was over, and now we're starting the second year.

WN: The first year you were like a spare?

GK: Yeah, exactly, a spare.

WN: And then second year was when you. . . .

GK: Second year is when I went on island. Yeah. And what we did, we went—they sent down a coast guard cutter *Tiger* out of Hilo. They had this smaller craft in Hilo, and then the *Itasca* in Honolulu. So the *Tiger* was going to go to Jarvis with people who were going to colonize Jarvis, and then the *Itasca* was going down to go colonize Howland and Baker. So, we went to Jarvis, and that's when I got off and stayed there for three months.

Fortunately, we had, as part of our leaders, the senior man there was Henry Ahia. Henry had been on the island the first year. And then we also had Hartwell Blake, and Hartwell Blake eventually attended the UH [University of Hawai'i], and ultimately he became mayor of Kaua'i for a while. Hartwell Blake, yeah. And he was the number-two senior. On the tail end was me and we had Frederick Lee who was the other classmate of mine. He was in the same class within, Class of '37. So, we were able to spend time on islands, and that was actually about three months. And then when we came back, we went back to school. But the beauty part about it, Henry being on Jarvis, he had been on Jarvis, so he knew the benefits or whatever was available on the island to enjoy and all that kind of stuff.

You know, when you think about it, you going on an island, there's nothing there really. You're leaving so much here in Hawai'i, on O'ahu at home, to go down there and what is there down there? Nothing. But, at that time, being young people, it was an adventure. It was great getting away from home, down there, and living the life of so-called Riley and not having anybody telling you what to do.

But we had our duties. I think one of the benefits was that, you know, when you think about four people, even though we all came from Kamehameha, you have different people that you're dealing with among four. You can sometimes get irritated by the other guy for what he did or whatever. But to eliminate any problems of confrontation, Henry and Blake decided that we would set up duties. You would do this, this time. So we had like, most important was the cook. He had to keep everybody happy about whatever he cooked, so the cook was supposed to be cook for one week. And the rule was, whoever was the cook, cook whatever he wanted. If you didn't like what the cook cooked, you go cook your own food. So, you know, okay, fine, that makes sense. You don't like it, cook your own.

The other important job was the person who did the weather reports, recording. You know, you had to check the condition of the skies. Like if it was cloudy, you had cumulus or cirrus if it was nice or clear and whatnot. You had to record whatever sky condition was, and then the wind velocity, and then the temperature, and then the barometer reading. You had to record all of that. We had the forms to fill out.



And then, the other person was, the number-three person, was assistant to the cook. When we landed on the island we had three fifty-five gallon drums of water, so water was a premium. You know, you couldn't waste water. The water was supposed to last you the time you were on the islands, and you weren't going to get anymore because it didn't rain that often. And so the cook assistant had to do the dishes. So to do the dishes, you had to go down the beach and with couple of buckets, get salt water, bring it up, and wash the dishes and everything and dry it out, or you took the dishes down to the beach and wash it at the beach. So, you had to do that using salt water, no fresh water. The only purpose for the fresh water, we used fresh water for drinking. And that was it, the extent of it. So even though we had, one time, taken some plants down there, they wanted to grow some plants, you couldn't water the plants because water was critical. Eventually the plants died because of lack of water.

WN: What kind plants?

GK: We stopped at Palmyra island and got some coconuts, coconut plants you know, and we were going to plant coconuts, thinking maybe it'll grow down there, but . . .

WN: Did you just do that on your own, or did someone tell you?

GK: They told us to do it. The military wanted to do that. They thought that it would be a good idea, whoever was in charge. We had the [U.S.] Department of Interior and the army personnel, some military personnel, who directed that we pick up some young coconut plants. Also, because of that, you didn't do any laundry. So what we had was, if you had to do any clothes laundry, you had to do it with the salt water. So it's only one conclusion, don't wear any clothes.

(Laughter)

WN: Makes sense.

GK: Yeah, made sense, right. Even when you think of people in nudist colony, hey, you don't think anything about being nude, it's just natural. And then being all Hawaiian boys, we could take the sun, and the sun was no problem.

WN: I'm wondering, you know, you said that you had the three fifty-five gallon tanks of water.

GK: Yeah.

WN: Say, what if, did it ever occur that maybe if you guys did run out, was there was a way to radio and get help?

GK: No. The first group and the second group, we had no means of communicating. No radio, no nothing. So as a result, what we did, we really hoarded the water. You didn't waste it because you figured, it came to our mind like, hey, the ship may not come down here, come back here in three months. Maybe something goes wrong, it may be five months, six months, before they get back here. So, you didn't use water all that much. It's strictly for cooking and for drinking. And so actually, we accumulated more water than we needed. But who knows, maybe at the end of the trip when they come in again, then you can say, "We getting extra water," but before then, there was no means of knowing how much you would ever need in terms of water. So, yeah, that's a good question. We had no means of communicating.

The military gave us all the food we needed, more than we needed, and they had great big gallon cans and big cans of food. So, when you first get there, after you get the drums unloaded and you roll it up to the beach, when the ship leaves, the first thing you do is get the water up on high mark, way up on high ground because if you had any storm it'd wash it back out, right? So you had to, number one, next day or even that day, roll at least one drum up on a high ground. And then, you did that, and then we stored all the food that we had, and we made an inventory. We wanted to know what we had so we could decide how much of it we could cook per day. So you can say, "Okay, we're allotted this, that we can do." You don't have to, but at least you know what your minimum food availability was. And then, whether you cook it or not, if you don't it's okay, it's still there. It builds up stockpile.

Being local boys, we did a lot more fish eating. There's a lot of fish. You know, you talk about going out here and fish. Over there when we first went down, one of the guys took a throw net down, and when we got down there, the next day, we were going crazy about fishing. Henry Ahia says, "Hey, don't take the net. It's too much work." He said, "Let me show you." So we got empty gunnysacks. And you get out there and you see schools of *āholehole* and schools of *uhu*, and he says, "Let me show you now." We chase the fish, we work it half moon, and we work the fish, and you chase it into a kind of small cove like. And the water is maybe only about six inches deep. And then he said, "Then you block it at the entrance with rocks." And then he said, "Now, come here, look." Two boys, okay, we get the gunny sack and you hold it, one on one end and the other end, and you hold it open, and then you go in and scoop the fish. That easy, scoop the fish up, and when you come up out of the water, maybe you got half a bag, quarter bag. So you put that aside, and then you go and do it again. So three times you get like two bags full.

WN: One bag is how many about?

GK: Oh, *chee*, you talk about a bag, hundreds of fish. *Āholehole* was only about so big.

WN: Six inches.

GK: Six inches. They get the big one, so six, eight inches. And then, when we went back to where the house was, the beach, we'd go down and we'd start cleaning it. You cleaned, removed the scales, and then you gut it. And you sitting on the reef on the edge of the beach, and you busy cleaning and gutting it. You throwing the guts back in the water, and pretty soon you feel something that's coming back at you. When you look, it's sharks there. Sharks smell the blood and all that, and they were there, and they're coming in for it. So, wow, so we go up and get a hook, and bait the fish, and throw it out and pull it in. When you pull it up, then get out of the water. These are sand sharks, they're not too bad. They're maybe about six, eight feet. So you pull it out of the water, take off the fish, and hit em on the head, and throw them back in the water.

WN: You took the fins off?

GK: No, we didn't do that. We should have because the shark fins, but we didn't think about cutting the fins off. We just threw it back in the water. So, we ate a lot of fish. What we did, we didn't have to salt it because the water was pretty salty, so all we did was, after we cleaned it and removed all the scales, then we dried it out. Lay it on the reef, above on the coral, above the water, and then next day turn it over. In a couple of days, you'd have dry fish. So when we came back, each one had a box of dried fish. And that was choice stuff, when we come home, the families go for dry fish. So when you pass out to each person or each family member, they would think, hey, that was the greatest. But we ate a lot of fish and that *aholehole*.

We had a lot of lobster. One day, we're standing in the water and watching the fish move. Freddy Lee says, "Ey, I feel something."

"Ey, what?"

He said, "I think we got lobsters down here."

So sure enough, the lobsters' antennae were feeling, and they rub against his leg. So when we look, sure enough.

So all you had to do is reach underneath the coral rock and come out with like two at a time. You stick it together and say, "George, you hold it."

"Okay, I'll hold the two."

And then he goes down again, get another two, and we go back. And so, we had lobster, we had fish, other kind of fish. *Uhu* was good, you know, the parrot fish. That was good meat because if you filleted it, you salt it and pepper. What we did was, when we

walked across the island we would pick up eggs, birds' eggs. So you make a batter, eggs, and then you dip the fish in it and then dip it in flour and then you fry it and you get batter-coated fish.

Also, we had meat, you know, the young gooney birds. Before the birds started to fly, the feathers grew to maturity, the birds had not eaten too much fish yet, so they don't taste that fish taste. So what we used to do was, we'd get ahold of two, and Saturdays, we make a *hekka*. You take it, you cut it, and peel off the skin and the feathers. Then at the chest spot where the meat was, you'd slice it up, and make a sauce with shoyu and sugar, and then cook it with the bird. And you have like *hekka*. If we had onions left, we would do that with the onions or whatever that we can salvage out of the cans. You know, fresh vegetables, but usually was just salt, shoyu, and sugar mixed up, and then roll the bird in it, and then just fry it. And so we had that, and we had a lot of rice. So we lived, instead of having all this so-called *Haole* food every day, we broke the monotony by cooking other things. And so we actually stretched our food supply out.

WN: What about like *tako*, squid, [and] crab?

GK: No more that kind of stuff. We didn't find *limu*, seaweed, like they do in Hawai'i. I don't know, for some reason, there wasn't any *limu*. If you had *limu* then you would have had *tako*, you know, and maybe crabs, but no more *limu*, unless the seaweed was in the deep water. But, on the reef there was no seaweed.

WN: The water must have been really clear then.

GK: Oh, very clear, very clear. When you look at the water, you look right to the bottom. So, we did fishing. Just about every day we ate fish. Someone would want fish. If you wanted fish you catch your own, and if you're not the cook, you cook your own fish.

WN: Did you know how to cook before you got to the island?

GK: Well, I tell you, my mother was half-Chinese, half-Hawaiian, and she was a good cook. She could throw stir-fries together. After I got through playing outside, I was getting kind of hungry, I would come home and looking around for something to eat. So I'd be in the kitchen with her, she tell me, "Okay, Son, here's quarter, go up the store and get a piece of meat, or do this." I would do that, or pick up some vegetables, and I'd come home. So I'm hanging around the kitchen all the time, right? And I'm watching her cook. So as a result, I think just by doing that. And then on the islands there you'd be watching the cook. So if you liked what the cook was cooking, maybe you're going to imitate him.

WN: Who was the best cook?

GK: I think maybe Hartwell Blake was—I can't now, that's so long. Anyway, like I say, if you didn't like the cook, you cooked your own. Henry Ahia wasn't the best cook because he used to make chili all the time. What he liked, he'd open a can of chili and he have a can of corn, and he would say "chili corn-carne." He would mix the chili with the corn and boil it, and then he would season it. So one time we were watching him add pepper and he was putting pepper so we said, "Hey, Henry, that's enough pepper! Too hot!"

He said, "No no, not enough." He kept adding pepper.

And we looking, we said, "This guy's crazy." So we all, we had to go and dilute it. We put that aside. We said, okay, had leftover, and we mix our own and cook. He ate it that night, and we watched him eating it. And the next day, he admitted. He said, "You know, I nearly died last night."

(Laughter)

GK: "Henry, you stupid! Why you do that?"

He said, "Well, I had to show you guys I'm macho. I can cook my own food and eat my own food." It was really comical.

I mean, like Sundays, Sundays was our church day. We had Sunday, usually in the late afternoon, we'd say church services. You know, you two guys, you imagine you're away from home, not knowing what's happening back there. My concern, I used to think, gee, what if I get home and I find out my mother had passed away or my father had passed away? So it was only natural that you pray to the good Lord to take care the families and friends back home that nothing happen to them. That was the way that I felt and we all felt that way just common thinking about it. You just happen to, like, you see, if we had communication it would be different, but not being able to communicate, you had to communicate through this medium of the good Lord. And so, we'd sing a hymn or two whatever we needed, and then say a verse or whatever.

And then after that we'd talk stories. And we'd usually talk about '*aumakuas*, and Hawaiian spirits, and all this spooky stuff. Just coincidentally, every time we dig into this deep Hawaiian stuff, Henry Ahia would be on duty taking weather reports. So weather reports, you'd have to take at six o'clock, and then nine o'clock, and at midnight, and then three o'clock in the morning. On our island, we had about four graves out in there [as a result of American guano operations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century on Jarvis]. Nighttime when you go take weather reports, the birds would be making noise, "Weee weeee." You know, all kinds of weird sounds. And Henry said, "You know, every time I'm on duty you guys talk stories like this. You know I got to get up and take the weather report."

(Laughter)

But you know he was kind of a joker. He would make up these crazy kind of comments and stuff.

WN: How did you wake up at three o'clock to take the report?

GK: We had an alarm. Yeah, I think we had an alarm.

WN: You had alarm?

GK: Yeah, because whoever had that would take the alarm, see. Otherwise, like you say, you couldn't be regular if you were sleeping. How do you know when to wake up? But during the day, it's every hour on the hour, so we had a clock. That we had, because we had to take weather reports during the day, every hour we take the weather reports. And then six o'clock, the last. Then after that, it's three hours, it's nine, twelve, and then three o'clock in the morning again, and six o'clock.

WN: You don't have to answer this, but did you folks forget and sometimes maybe cheat and sometimes maybe make it up?

GK: Well, there's a possibility. I mean really, I don't think I ever forgot. I could have because you know, but no, it wasn't something that we recognized as being a problem. If we did, it could be because you sleeping, you don't know what the guy's doing. He could have fudged it, instead of getting up, exactly, he could have. Because you know after a while you have—well, let's say it this way, the weather hardly changed, so usually from this day to the next day, it was just about the same. Every day, every night it was about the same, except maybe during the day the cloud formation would change, but the temperature, the wind and everything, you know. So that's a good question, Warren.

WN: That's what I would do. (Chuckles)

GK: I would think, and from what Henry used to remark, if it affected him that much, he could have not gotten up and just fudge it like you say. But, we tried to do an honest job.

WN: Let me turn the tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

GK: . . . very organized. So, we never had any confrontation, no problems. I'm thinking how did these different people—even though we were down there—you were on each island, you did what you wanted to do. Our only requirements were really, came down to it, take the weather reports and survive. Make sure nothing happens to you, live a good life. And that's all they could expect of you. That's all anybody could expect. "Here you are, and when I come back three months from now, I want to see you in good health and alive." So when Arthur made this statement, I thought, well, that's interesting because I don't feel that. I feel that we need to be organized in order to avoid any problems.

Like we say, well, the cook—and one of the things when we went down, what we took were a lot of magazines. So during the day, we had, amongst ourselves, kind of a challenge who's going to cook the best meal. So we would go through the magazines looking for recipes, especially *Good Housekeeping*. Man, the magazines used to be read, re-read, down to just few pages left. Because imagine, nothing to do all day. So you could be lying on the cot, reading all day long, and just looking at magazines and looking for recipes. And so, if a person came up, the cook came up with a good recipe you're going to want to remember to cook because the time he's going to be cook again is like four weeks later. And so, if you can, hey, that's pretty good, you copy it down so you remember what to cook. But, eating is important. Let's face it, even today we all work to be able to afford a good meal and go out once in a while and enjoy.

In fact, when I went to Samoa, that time I never mentioned it, but one of my problem was needing to use the bathroom in the morning. They had outhouses, way out. You had to go to the outhouse or you go in the bushes.

WN: This is Samoa you're talking about?

GK: Samoa, yeah. So now, back on the island [i.e., Jarvis], if you wanted to use the bathroom, you go off away from the house, you dig a hole. And when you got through, you covered it. The other alternative, if you didn't want to do that, is go down the beach and just squat and do your business. Then you jump in the water, swim little bit, wash up and everything, and then you come back. But, that's the way it was done. I'm thinking and I'm saying, gee, nobody ask any question about what. . . . (Chuckles)

TT: Nobody ask about *lua* question. (Chuckles)

GK: But you know. Again, you just assume that people—even me, I assume about how did [they manage on] the other islands? And maybe one day I'll get in a position where I can ask the person, "Hey, how did you guys do this?" or "How did you do that?" because it wasn't a standard procedure for everybody to follow, "You got to do this way." The procedure was survive and take the weather reports. That's important. When the ship

comes back, it's going pick you up and go home. Even at that time, now, how much did we get paid? You know how much we got paid?

WN: Was it two dollars a day or something?

GK: Three dollars a day. Now, you figure, three dollars a day, wow. But anyway, three dollars a day was big money those days. I worked at the [pineapple] cannery and the pay at the cannery, summertime, paid, what, twenty-five cents an hour? So you figure, we work eight hours, that's what?

WN: Two dollars.

GK: Two dollars. So I go on the islands and I'm having a good time and everything and I'm getting paid three dollars.

WN: Nothing to spend it on either.

GK: Nothing to spend it on. When you came back, they gave you a check. Man, you're a . . . In fact, when I came back and I gave my mother money—Kamehameha Schools at that time, boarding, \$63.50. Sixty-three dollars and fifty cents, and then you had to buy extra money for books.

TT: Is that for the whole year?

GK: The whole year for boarding. And then uniform, you know you had to buy a gray uniform. And the uniform I think was like ten dollars. And at that time, the gray uniform, when you graduated, you turned it in.

WN: This is your military uniform?

GK: Yeah, military uniform you turned it back in. Even the khakis, you turned back in. If they good shape, the next year, they can sell it out.

But, when we were down on the islands there, we had time. What I did was, Freddie Lee had brought down a guitar. I never played guitar, although my father played guitar and he had one in the house. So I thought, well, good opportunity to start learning to play the guitar. I played guitar. I played football at school. Kamehameha School, junior year I was on the varsity team. So I thought, before I went on the cruise I went to see Mr. Caldwell who was the proprietor of the equipment. So I told him, "Hey, Mr. Caldwell, I'm going down to the island so I would like to get a football and a pair of shoes."

So he said, "No problem." He gave me a pair of shoes and a football.

WN: Spike shoes?



GK: Spike shoes, yeah. My thinking was that if I go down there and I get in shape—and I should be able to get in shape with nothing to do all day, right? I can be running on the sand and everything. And when I come back to school, I'd be ahead of the gang because I'm in good shape. Which I did, every day I would punch the bag, and then I ran, and I did push-ups and stuff for about two hours. So, when we got back and went back into school, of course, we started football practice right away. And so I was in top shape. I'm not bragging, but if you think about it, why not? I had all the time in the world, so I might as well use it, use the time to benefit myself. So I came back. I'm not bragging, but I made all-star. I played end, I made all-star. I attribute that to good common sense, getting in shape. Being able to maneuver and do what you're supposed to do.

WN: Did others do that, too?

GK: I don't know. See, even my partner Freddie Lee, he was supposed to be a guard. What we did, you did on your own. You did, and if a person saw you, "Hey George, what we going to do today?"

"Well, let's go turn over some rocks and find shells," or "Let's go fishing," or whatever, but otherwise, you tried. So, I would walk around the island. We had the *Amaranth*, the wreck of the *Amaranth*, on Jarvis. So, when we first got down there we thought we're going to make surfboards. Nice big planks on this wooden ship, and so we went down there and pried the darn plank loose and came back and we started to work on shaping the board for surfboard. It took us that long to build a board. Shaping it and everything.

WN: What kind of tools did you have?

GK: Exactly. See, what kind of tools did you have? We had hatchet, small hatchet, and a hammer, and that's all. So you can imagine, took three months to build a surfboard. Trying to make it round, the side round, trying to shape the front and the back and all of that. When we finally got it done, I said, "Freddie, we finally get the surfboard. Tomorrow we going surfing." Tomorrow I'm playing the guitar and I'm looking out there and I say, "Wow, there's the *Itasca* coming in."

(Laughter)

WN: To pick you up?

GK: Yeah, pick us up. So the first thing they saw, we were so proud of our surfboards. They says, "Oh great, so we'll take it." That's a no-no because you can get out there and something happen, and that's a safety no-no. You don't go out there surfing. So, hey, after all that hard work. (Chuckles)

WN: Who reprimanded you guys?

GK: The project officer. I think was Lieutenant Miller, I think. I don't know. Not Miller. He wasn't a lieutenant. At that time, we had the Department of Interior, I think, was in charge of the project. Initially it was the United States Army and I think Department of Interior.

WN: Commerce.

GK: Either commerce or interior. Department of Commerce and then the Department of Interior got involved.

TT: [Richard Blackburn] Black.

GK: Black, yep, exactly. So they confiscated our surfboard after all that hard work, but anyway.

(Laughter)

WN: Too bad you don't have it today, yeah? Put it on your wall.

GK: Yeah. That would have been something beautiful because it is really from a wreck, the *Amaranth*. Now that you mention it, it was stupid to let them take it away from us. That was ours. Too bad you weren't around to advise us.

(Laughter)

WN: Did you have skegs on them? Did you have a skeg?

GK: No, no, in those days nobody had skeg. It was strictly just a plain board. In fact, in those days, surfboards were made out of redwood. Hunk of lumber.

WN: That's true, yeah? And those redwood boards didn't have a skeg?

GK: No skeg. Skeg is new, came in later, until after they made the hollow boards. They started with the solid redwood plank. In fact, my wife, she used to surf out here [i.e., Maui]. She was one of two, the early surfers out here. Nobody surfed out here, my wife did. She and a friend, the Tavares girl next door, were the surfers. And then, when she graduated and went to university, I think they lived out there at Waikiki Beach, in Waikiki, so she had a surfboard. She said they would drag it, two of them carry it all the way down to Kūhiō Beach to go surfing. But, no, in those days—and then they came with hollow board but at that time it was balsa. They came out strips, redwood, and then balsa, and then redwood to cut down. And then finally, all balsa.

Getting back to us, after all that work. However what we did on our island, Jarvis, we had a kind of a bay like that went from outside the channel—it's a channel—all the way

into the shore. Every evening in the deep part, we'd get these *hihīmanus*, you know what *hihīmanus*, the (bat-sting ray) fish. They would come in every evening and play in there in the channel, in the deep part. And so we thought, wow, it'd be interesting to get up close to see them diving and everything. So what we did, we got some boards from the *Amaranth*, and we lashed them together, and we made a raft. We had a long rope and we tied it to the raft. And two guys got on the raft, and we let it go. And they would get out there right over where the *hihīmanus* are swimming. They would come up and flip around, really, ho, a lot of action. And then after a while, we pull it back in, and then change, you know, somebody else go on. But, that's about the closest we came to a deep-sea adventure, making that raft and having it float out to the deep water. Of course, it was tied to the shore, we had a line on it.

WN: What was the *Amaranth* made of? What kind of wood?

GK: Solid planks, they were real heavy planking.

WN: You know what kind of wood that was?

GK: Oh, it must have been fir. Must have been fir because I don't think it was any special. . . . We were, at that time, looking at it, it was just hardwood, that's what it was, real hardwood. I don't know how she ever got there. Must have been one time they had real, real bad weather to have that thing lifted right on the beach. It was quite a ways from the edge of the reef on land, which indicated that there's possibility for having real bad weather. And you know, the islands were not that high, so if they had real bad weather, they could come on land and you'd have to run to the middle of the island to get protection from big waves. So, when you think about it, when we got home after that three months down there, I felt that three months on an island like that was enough. There's other things to do. I figured I had to go about my life and I did my share.

WN: So you had two tours. The first was as a spare, and that was when you were a junior. And then your senior year was when you stayed on Jarvis.

GK: Senior year, yeah, I stayed on Jarvis.

WN: Jarvis was after you graduated?

GK: No, I went before I graduated. That was summer of '36. I graduated in '37.

WN: Oh, and so when you went to Samoa it was '35?

GK: Thirty-five, yeah.

WN: Oh, you were a young boy.

GK: Like I say, I have the distinction, I think, of being the youngest person to make the trip because I was just a junior in high school.

TT: Was that the lower eleven or the upper eleven?

GK: I was the upper eleven. Because Kamehameha at that time, for the junior year, you had lower eleven junior, and then higher junior. The reason was you worked two weeks in a trade and then you went back to school two weeks. So you were in and out, so it took two years to do one year's work.

TT: Where did you work?

GK: I was a welder. I worked at O'ahu Sugar Company. Actually, I was first assigned to work for Island Welding—at Kamehameha School now—in Island Welding and that was in town. Where the tax office is today, that used to be Island Welding. At that time, they had Island Welding, Pacific Welding, and another outfit welding shop. And Island Welding was owned by Al Mullin. So, after I was down there working about two weeks, during summer—no, when school first started, I was playing football so we'd start practice about two o'clock right after school in the afternoon. That was about two o'clock. And I was working at Island Welding, and by the time I quit work at four, and go up and caught the streetcar to get back to school, and then I go change and get on the practice field, hell, the guys are just about ready to quit, come back in. The coach got after me, "How come it's taking you so long to get back here?"

So I finally said, "Well, the only way I can do is get to see Mr. Mullin, the owner of the company. So, I told him, "Mr. Mullin, I have a problem, I need to leave work two hours early to get back to school so I can do this."

And he said, "Well, you making twenty-five cents an hour." He says, "So if you're going to do that," he says, "I'm going to have to cut your pay down." He could have cut my pay like two hours I never work, reduce my pay by fifty cents a day. He says he's going to cut my pay down. That's penalizing me for the beginning of the time I'm working, like twenty cents an hour, I think. So, I didn't quite like that. I did, anyway, I used to leave early. And it was becoming a problem.

So, we had the person who coordinated the working relations with the companies, was a Mr. Banning. So I went to see him and I told him my problem and I wanted to change my place of employment.

He says, "Why?"

Working at Island Welding, I was like a laborer. I did all hard work, the things like scraping the steel, and then painting it and all that. I didn't feel that I was learning

anything. It was laborer's work. So I told Mr. Banning, I said, "You know, I'm not learning anything, I'm strictly doing laborer's work."

However, there was a welder, a guy by the name of Toby Cate, who was an inside welder. He did all the gas welding and really smart guy. He was a cripple. He had infantile paralysis, I think, when he was young, so he walked with a limp. But, every chance that Toby had, he would call me and he tell me, "George, you come help me." So I used to go help him and I learned from him, I learned a lot from him. I learned gas welding from him. So, when Al Mullin saw me, he would tell me, "Okay, you go over here, you do that or you do that." Like I said, back to a laborer's job.

So I talked to Mr. Banning. The boys who worked out at the plantation, O'ahu Sugar Company in from Waipahu and 'Ewa, they tell me, "You know, George, there's a lot of work out there. They could use you out there." So I got Mr. Banning, I convinced him, okay, that I should go to O'ahu Sugar Company. And O'ahu Sugar Company, at that time, what we did, the school provided a big limousine. They rented this limousine and driver to go all the way out to pick up the boys who played football. All the way from 'Ewa, they stop at Waipahu, and come in to Kamehameha Schools. He did that every day. So now, it's really great. They get somebody to pick us up and take us after practice, after we had dinner and school, take us back to the plantation. So that turned out. Plus, working in the plantation, it was great because people out there taught you all they knew. They're real friendly, taught you how to do things, how to weld, how to layout, and all of that. So, it was a real good learning experience in the plantation, plus the fact that we had transportation going back and forth. In fact at one time all of us guys who were, five of us, out there in the plantation, we thought it'd be a good idea if we bought our own car, then we can come in and go back later at night. We can stay in town, go circus or whatever. So bought a car for fifty dollars. Each one contributed ten dollars. (Chuckles)

WN: What kind of car?

GK: We had a Star, Star roadster.

WN: Oh, Star.

GK: Yeah, old Star. It worked a while, and then one day we had problems with it. The darn thing stuck, we couldn't get it to running. In fact, we were at Waipahu by then, and it was a day that rained. So we were supposed to play 'Iolani football that Wednesday, and there we were down there trying to get this thing started. We had told the guy who used to run the taxi not to pick us up because we had this car, and he was happy because he was getting paid. Don't say anything and everybody happy. We were on the side of the road, how we going to get back to town? And finally, these guys came by on

a truck, personnel truck, was Island Welding people. So when I saw them, I waved them down. They all happy to see me.

They say, "What are you doing?"

I say, "We're stuck. Our car, we can't start it. We need to get back to town."

"Okay," they say, "We tow you."

So they gave us a towline, and they towed us from Waipahu all the way to Kalihi. Kalihi, Gulick Avenue, I say, "Fine, leave us here. We're okay." I live right down Gulick Avenue, right? So, unhitch, thank them and everything, we push the car down to my mother's place where I live. I put the car in the parking lot, and then we walked up to Kam School. When we got up there, we're looking around, going out to the gymnasium, change clothes. The coach was there, Bill Wise. He says, "What are you guys doing here? Banning went down to see you guys."

"Oh, we came up to play football."

He says, "The game's cancelled. It's raining."

(Laughter)

You know in those days, when you went to Kamehameha they gave you a hundred credits to start, disciplinary credits. If you did anything wrong, they could say, "You got ten credits demerits," or twenty, depending on the severity of the infraction. So, what happens, they put us probation. If you get below fifty credits, that's probation. You restricted, no more going to town. You restricted, and every week you can gain ten credits. So all of us guys were restricted to school. We couldn't go off the campus, and that was one time I lost credits. I mean, really, we were in deep trouble.

TT: Why was it so bad? Just because you guys had skipped out on . . .

GK: Yeah, we left the job early. We weren't supposed to leave the job. And we told the people, the foreman. The people at the plantation were real nice about it. If you told them you had a problem, no problem because plantation was maintenance work mostly. Maintaining, and off-season, when they're not grinding [cane], usually you get extra hours. But there's always enough work, I'm not saying there wasn't enough work, but there was always work that you can put aside. So we were penalized fifty credits each for being off the job.

TT: Man, that's severe.

WN: Can we back up little bit, you were talking about your father and you said he was a healer. Do you remember anything, incidents about that, what your father did?

GK: It was really uncanny with him. He worked as a maintenance man along the highways. He would come home and he would tell my mother—we had like eight of us in the family, kids—and he would say, “You know, So-and-so isn’t feeling good.” It’s *ma’i*, sick. So how the hell he knows? He’s just coming home now and before he’s getting home, he’s telling my mother that one of us is sick. So, my mother would look around whoever’s closest to the house and she would call that person, “Okay, you go get sister. So-and-so, oh, you go get brother and come back. Papa wants to see him.” So when he came back, and sure enough, that person may not be feeling good. He isn’t feeling good, maybe runny nose, or coughing and everything. And his method of healing was, he had a teaspoon of olive oil, supposed to be blessed oil, and he would give you that teaspoon, you take it and then he would prayer over you. And then you know, surprisingly, shortly after that, you’re feeling fine.

If it were more serious than that, he would call upon the good Lord or whoever it was to heal this person. I used to see people come, grown-ups that come to the house, for his blessings to be cured spiritually. In fact, one guy who used to come that I was amazed. Some of these boxers, professional boxers, used to come and have him pray so that he can help them win the fight. Because of that kind of an experience, I sometimes say that if a wife came in and says, “My husband is sick at home, but he doesn’t believe in this kind of stuff, so can you do something to help him?” He would have me sit down in place, he would transfer. He says, “Okay, you are now this person, and me I be in that person’s spirit changed.” And you know, when he prayed, I would have all kinds of feeling. Uncanny, I would be fighting him, trying to fight with him and everything. Then he would explain to the lady what was happening. Maybe somebody was jealous of this guy and he had problems with somebody. There was a need to settle a relationship, and cure that, and not have that kind of relationship happen.

Being in the position to witness things like that, I believed in it. You hear, *ho’oponopono*, you hear a lot of that now. You hear people talk about *ho’oponopono*. In our days, when we were kids, my father and mother would be at the head of the room and we would be scattered, sitting on the floor in each corner and stuff. When they came around, you would recite a psalm. Maybe “God is good” or whatever, in Hawaiian, and you go right around. Everybody would recite, and then he would ask us, “Did any one of you have any fights with your classmates or friends or anything?” And if you say, “No.” Okay, then he would pray that forgive everybody and good health and all of that, and then we went to bed. But every night before we went to bed, we had this prayer service in the house, in the room. From what I witnessed, I believed in it.

I had an experience. I was working the [Pearl Harbor Naval] Shipyard in the planning department. I'm sitting at my desk, and I was a supervisor, and one day I began to fall asleep at my desk. At that time, my mind went totally blank. Now, this is strange, I hear people talk, "I don't know how I got home last night. I went out and had a beer buzz and I got home and I don't know how I got there." I used to think that was a lot of baloney, but this experience happened to me. At my desk I got up and I went across to my cohort Jack Wheat, and I said, "Jack, I'm sick, I'm not feeling good. I need to go to the dispensary." And I knew where the dispensary was; I'd been in the shipyard like twenty years. So he told me—he thought it was strange—but he told me where to go. I went down there. I went to the dispensary and the doctor told me I had a high fever. I needed to go see my own doctor. So then I had to get from the dispensary all the way up to the supply main building to see my supervisor. So I went, and I told him I had to go home because I was sick, I had to see a doctor. So I went downstairs, I got downstairs, and I was just walking around there. This friend of mine who lives in Kalihi, Harry Kealoha, he was a good volleyball coach. Harry Kealoha lived in Kalihi. He said, "George, what are you doing down here?" Now, what I'm telling you, I don't know what happened. This all in a trance I'm going through. I found this out after I came back to work. And Harry tells me, "What are you doing?"

I said, "You know, I got to get home to go see my doctor." I say, "I need somebody to take me home."

He says, "I take you home." So Harry took me home to Kalihi from Pearl Harbor. I got home, I called my wife at work, and she was surprised to hear me because I don't normally complain about being sick. So she called the doctor and the doctor told her, "You bring George to the office." So she came home, I was in bed, she dressed me and everything, and I got to see the doctor. What they did, they put me in the waiting room, and I went out of my mind. I was in what, delirium? Yelling and everything, so they came, they call the ambulance, they put me in a straitjacket and took me to the hospital up at Liliha.

WN: Maluhia?

GK: No.

TT: Kuakini?

GK: What do you call?

WN: Oh, Saint Francis.

GK: Saint Francis [Hospital]. Usually, my wife, we always went to Kuakini [Hospital], but they had no openings so they took me to Saint Francis. When I went up there, they



didn't know what was wrong with me. So they tested me out and everything and they finally thought that maybe I had some virus. Encephalitis, spinal fever, and stuff. See, I had been in the service in the Philippines, so they concluded that maybe it took all those years for the darn whatever I picked up in the Philippines to incubate in me before it finally broke out. So, I was in there like four days in a coma. My aunt used to come every day and she pray over me—and my dad too—and she would *lomilomi* my feet. If you get people who are in bed and are sick, not feeling good, if you go in there what you can do is rub their feet. More or less caress and that provides real great relief for the person, even if they can't talk. But if you did that, it gives them a lot of relief. But anyway, my aunt used to do that, and the doctor told my wife, "You know, when George gets well, he's going to be a vegetable because his fever has been so high it's damaged his brain."

So my wife told the doctor, "If that's going to be the case, George would want you to kill him cause he doesn't want to be alive."

But, my aunt used to come and *lomilomi* me, massage me and everything, and she used to tell my wife, "If he lasts two more days, he's going to be all right."

And God's truth, one morning I wake up and I'm looking, goddamn it, what the hell am I doing here? Now this is strange. I've been in a coma all this time, then all of a sudden one morning I get up and I'm looking—this is like four o'clock in the morning—and I'm wondering where am I? So finally it came to me that I should call my wife. So about five o'clock in the morning I went downstairs and I call home. In fact, my roommate in the room was another Hawaiian guy and I asked him if he had money.

He said, "What for?"

I said, "I need to make a telephone call."

So he loaned me two bits, quarter, and I walked downstairs. From my room, walked out and everything. In fact, I had tubes in me, through my penis. I pull the tube off, intravenous feeding, I pull all this, pull this out, pull everything. I jump out of the bed. Fortunately I didn't fall off the bed. I walked downstairs, I passed the doctor. They told me after that I had passed the doctor. He never even recognized me. I was going downstairs and I call home. My wife answered.

I says, "Look."

She says, "Who's this?"

I says, "Who do you think? I'm George, I'm calling you. What the hell am I doing here?"

She says, “You get back to bed!” She’s scolding me.

The reason I’m telling you folks, things like that can happen. And so, being a Hawaiian and this kind of relation with Hawaiian medicine, like I say, my dad was a *lā’au kāhea*, you call for relief. “Calling,” that’s what it is. *Kāhea* is calling.

So my aunt told me, not told me, but told my wife, “When George comes out of the hospital, the first thing you do, you bring him down to Lā’ie.” She lived down at Lā’ie, very strong Mormon member. “Bring him down there and I’m going to give him a *pūlo’ulo’u* bath.” So I went down there, and she made me sit on the round tub, hot water, she boiled a lot of hot water, and then rub me down with, wasn’t Vicks, was some kind of a eucalyptus oil. She rubbed me down with eucalyptus oil and then covered me with this sheet. The water was hot, steaming. So actually what she did was give me a steam bath, so I could perspire and get all of that bad stuff out of my system. So I did that. And after that, she told my wife, “Bring him back tomorrow for one more day and he’ll be cleaned of all that bad”—supposedly bad stuff in my blood. So I did, I went another day. But you know, that was some experience.

Then, what I had to do now, I’m getting back and I was thinking, how the hell did I do all this? So as I went back, I talked to people, Harry says, “I found you downstairs. I took you home.”

“Oh Harry, thank you so much.”

I really appreciated it because, hey, I could have been wandering around and I could have died. I could have had a heart attack in between, you know. But anyway, I made it home. So all in all, I’m happy to be alive really. So, after that, realizing, recognizing what can happen to this body of ours. I kind of changed my lifestyle. I try to do things right, and not abuse my body. Not drink too much or whatever, not smoke and stuff like that. But when you go through an experience like that, you begin to realize that there are limitations.

WN: So your father was Mormon?

GK: Yep.

WN: Your auntie was Mormon.

GK: Yep.

WN: So were you raised Mormon?

GK: I was raised Mormon, yeah. But when I went to Kamehameha School, Kamehameha School was Protestant. And more so, when I got married to my wife, she was Protestant,

too. So, I converted. But as far as my dad and mother were concerned, the point is you go to church. Whatever church you go, at least you go to a church. Like my daughter now, even Ellen, who's a nurse up here, she went to college at Lamoille, I think, Illinois, and they had a Reorganized Church [of Latter-Day Saints], Mormon church. Reorganized over there, as opposed to the regular Mormon Latter-Day Saints. When she came back here I thought she would go to Mormon, but she ended up being a Catholic. She did not quite, I don't know whatever reason, but she, anyway, chose to be a Catholic. So till today, she's a Catholic. No big deal.

WN: What about your mom, what was her background like?

GK: My mother came from the Big Island originally.

WN: Your father was from Kīpahulu, you said.

GK: Yes, Kīpahulu. And even today, we run into like the Kahanu name, Kīpahulu, Princess Kahanu came from Hāna. Just the other day we were in Costco and—well, we've met this lady, but she's a Kahanu from Hāna, and their family inherited the Pi'ilani *heiau*. So, one time my sister came up here and she had never gone on to Hāna, so I call my friend up, Max Coleman. I said, "Hey, Max I got sister Lei up here, she wants to go to Hāna." So we went to Hāna. Over there he made a lot of side trips because Max is kind of familiar with that side, so he turn down this road and we went. I said, "Max, where we going?"

He said, "I'm going to take you to the Pi'ilani *heiau*." So, when we got there, there's a lot of people working, so he got off and he went to see them. And he said, "You know, I got two Kahanus here," and they were amazed. He said, "They want to look around."

They said, "Go ahead." So we were able to walk all over the darn place.

But this lady, I started to talk to you, we were supposed to have gone, what, last week, the taro festival, and something happened that we had to cancel out. We couldn't go because something else happened. But we met this lady, kind of a relative, and we told her that at that time we were scheduled to go. She says, "Oh, you folks come stay with me and then I'll take you to the *heiau*." She's originally Kahanu. So my father—when I was a kid and I used to ask him, because he never spoke too much about his early days—so I asked him one time, "Papa, where do you come from?"

He says, "Oh, Kīpahulu, Maui."

And from Kīpahulu he went to Lahainaluna School and I think he graduated there and from there he went to Honolulu. And he had a cousin in Honolulu who had offered him a job with Theo H. Davies, so he worked at that time with Theo H. Davies. But my dad

used to say at one time that their family owned all of Kīpahulu Valley. And then not only that, he claims now, that the family, too, owned a lot of Nu‘uanu Valley. So, what does that mean? I never get out and say, “Hey, I’m royalty,” or anything like that because my dad always say you just do your own thing and whatever. You don’t go out and try to boast about you’re this and you’re that.

Getting back to my mother . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 38-9-2-02; SIDE ONE

WN: Your mother was from Big Island?

GK: Yeah, my mother was from Kōhala. And she also had family out at the Kona side, Miloli‘i. So when they were young, they would go visit the family over there and they go ‘*ōpelu* fishing. In the early days, the old days, a lot of the ‘*ōpelu*—dry ‘*ōpelu*—came from Miloli‘i, that side, Kona side. So even today, if you go on that side, you see dried ‘*ōpelu* that comes from that side. She used to tell us the way the Hawaiians cleaned it, they’d go with their finger, and just puncture the fish, the skin, and just with their finger, cut clean along the bone, the spine, and then right up through. And then they’d split it open, and take the innards out, and then salt it, and then put it in a bucket. And then after a while they would dry it on the rocks. So that was one way of making money. I mean, that was their source of revenue. And so, when I was a kid and growing up in Kalihi, the family would send us fish. What we would do is, buy these containers—five-gallon, square tins—of soda crackers and we’d send it back on the ship to Kona. Because that was their bread. In those days, you know, Hawaiians didn’t have their bread. That was what they had for bread, Saloon Pilot crackers were their one wish. You know, “Please send us,” so they would exchange. They’d send us fish and we send [crackers] back.

But my mother also came from, like I said, Kōhala. In those days, the Hawaiians believe, Hawaiians really weird. If they had a family that had no children and they knew you had children, they would tell a person, “You know, the next child you have, I want the child.” And their belief was, if you don’t give the child, that’s bad luck. So, my mother’s family, we had uncles [with] all different [last] names. And I used to wonder, even like my aunt that was the doctor *kāhea*, she was a sister and she was raised someplace else. My mother was Kōhala, my aunt was. . . . I don’t know where she was, but anyway, but I think she was down in Honolulu. My aunt married John Kinolau, and Kinolau family supposed to have some royalty in that family. But anyway, my mother eventually got married and then moved down to Honolulu. The husband, I think, passed away. So my

father is actually my mother's second [husband]. That was his first wife, but for her it was second husband.

Going back, we grew up in Kalihi. Getting back to some of the Hawaiian stories, my aunt married a lighthouse keeper. And he was at Makapu'u lighthouse at one time, one stretch, they get moved around so. At one time, he was at Kīlauea [light]house on Kaua'i, and he was transferred to Barbers Point, and then he was transferred to Makapu'u. They lived on 12th Avenue, my aunt did. And so, we would go up there, spend weekends with her. And one time our uncle was supposed to be home by nine o'clock that morning. At that time, what they did, they would, from Kaimukī, ride a horse all the way to Makapu'u lighthouse. Yeah, imagine. And then he would come all the way back to Kaimukī, leave the horse, and he would go home at 12th Avenue. And one day, he didn't come back. He didn't show up, so we asked my aunt "What happened to uncle, he's not home yet?" And you know what? Now, this is kind of a Hawaiian mentality, she said, "Oh, he ran into a devil, a *kepolō*, on the way home." And the horse was spooked. The horse reared and threw him off, so he's walking home. So the horse left him and went all the way back to Makapu'u. See, the horse knows where is home. But, you know, when you think about things like that happening, I mentioned because the fact that his Hawaiian belief that things like that did happen. Some people said, "Ah." But hey, like I'm telling you about my experience with my dad, my father, and things that happened that he prayed and everything.

I worked in the [Pearl Harbor Naval] Shipyard. I worked shipyard as a Kam School grad. Kamehameha Schools training, especially in mechanical drawing, was so fantastic. When I graduated I worked for Bishop Estate. I was without job, I quit Waipahu [i.e., O'ahu Sugar Company], moved into town. I got a call from John McCombs, and he was looking for a maintenance person to run a crew up there at the girls' school [i.e., Kamehameha School for Girls] to fix up the auditorium and stuff. So I went, and I applied, and I got the job being a supervisor. So, after that, when the job was finished, he asked me, "What are you going to do?"

I says, "I'm going to look for another job."

So he says, "You know what, we got a trustee, George [Miles Collins], working for E.E. Black [Company], he could maybe find a job for you." So I got this note from John McCombs, and I went to E.E. Black, and they started me off as a welder.

WN: So before E.E. Black you were at Kamehameha Schools maintenance?

GK: I had Kamehameha School, and then actually I went to Inter-Island Steam Navigation Company.

WN: Which one was first?

GK: Inter-Island, before Black.

WN: So you graduated Kamehameha in '37.

GK: Thirty-seven.

WN: So from '37 you went to Inter-Island?

GK: Yeah.

WN: Not very long though, yeah?

GK: No, I was there because we went on a strike [in 1938]. Inter-Island, it's the first strike in Hawai'i.

WN: Was that the boatman's strike or something?

GK: Trades union—the welders and the riveters and all these guys. At that time, Inter-Island was hardly doing any business, so when we went on strike, Stanley Kennedy, who was the president, decided that he wasn't going to re-activate Inter-Island. In fact, he was going to tie up all the ships. At that time, they had *Hualālai*, *Wai'ale'ale*, *Humu'ula*, and *Hawai'i*, four ships sailing between islands. They were carrying cattle and passengers. And he was going to tie it up. What he did, he went into the airlines. He started, I think, Hawaiian Airlines. As a result, we had to look for a job. That's when I went to Kamehameha. Then from there, Kamehameha, I went to E.E. Black.

WN: So, you weren't on strike.

GK: I went on strike.

WN: You went on strike, oh okay. But then so, because you were striking and business wasn't too good, they sort of laid you guys off.

GK: Right. They did, they laid us off.

(Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

GK: Anyway, I was fortunate in that, sometimes you wonder, as old as I am—you folks still young people—but you wonder in life, things happen and a lot of things are beyond your control. But if you think about it, if you make the right moves, and you're at the right place at the right time, it turns out for the better. So here it is, we go on strike. I get this call, I don't know how this person got a hold of me anyway, and asked me to work at Kamehameha School. And then, after that, when the job was finished, he asked me—

he liked what I did. He was happy with my work. He says, "Okay, now, what you going to do?"

I says, "Well, I going to look for another job."

"What can you do?"

I says, "Well, I can do this, I can do that."

He says, "Okay, let me give you a note," to George Collins who was a trustee with Kamehameha, Bishop Estate. He gave me a note to George Collins and he told him that he's a person that's looking for a job and he's qualified to do welding and stuff, whatever, steel work. So I went down there—I didn't know this person, but George introduced me to Mr. E.E. Black. What a big guy he was. And so he asked me, "What can you do?"

I said, "Well, I can do welding, I can lay out."

He says, "Okay, you go back there and you see John Jose." Now, John Jose was a shop superintendent. At that time, they had a welder, guy by the name of Hirata. But, actually he was a rivet heater.

WN: Rivet what?

GK: Rivet. Rivet heater.

WN: Heater?

GK: You know, when you driving rivets, you have to heat it in order to get it soft enough so you can plug the hole. So anyway, he says, "Go back there and see John and he'll put you to work." And this guy was a tough guy, a Portuguese guy. I went to see him. He says, "What can you do?"

I say, "I can do this, this."

He says, "Okay. Here, I give you a sketch." So he gave me a sketch. He says, "You go do this."

So you know, I figure, okay, I had to make some rings. I had to lay it out, get the circumference, find out the length, figure how long it should be, allow overlap and whatnot, put it in the roll, roll it, and then I had to weld it. So when I got through, I says, "Okay, Mr. Jose I'm finished."

He say, "What? You finished?"

I said, "Yeah."

He looked at me kind of funny, you know. He said, "Okay, let me go check on your work." So he came over, he measured it. Okay, pretty good. So he says, "Okay, you go do this." I did several things, he was trying me out, seeing what I was capable of doing.

So, about the third or fourth day in there, I was working and he comes to me and he tells me, "You know what? You take that truck and you go down to Pier 35. Got a welding job down there." And what they were doing, E.E. Black had a job to build a pier in Port Allen, Kaua'i. They were building this whole pier, laying out the pile, drive pile, the deck, the whole building and everything. But what they were doing was building the piles. You know what the piles are? The footing you drive in the water, and then you build whatever structure over it. They were building it on a pineapple barge. They had all the forms built on the barge. And they had this big concrete mixer on the pier. And what they were doing, they had trucks that were hauling the dry mix all the way from Mō'ili'ili. They come all the way down Beretania, all the way down to the pier, and then they would dump it in this hopper, in this mixer, and the mixer would mix. It's a great big mixer. And then they take it from there. They dump the mixed concrete into buggies and then we'd have guys push it up the ramp onto the barge and then they'd fill the forms. These forms, they were all built on the barge. So, what happened, one of the cables to lift this big hopper, the eye—where it anchored on the top so they can pick up, and there's pulleys pull and push this thing up—had snapped off. So they had this guy welding it, and he couldn't get it to stick. He couldn't weld it. And Black was there. He was getting upset, very upset.

So when I got down there, I don't know what's going on, so he tells me, "Get up there and weld that." You know, and I'm looking, so I crawl up there and I says, "Hey, hi," you know, this guy working. He had tried. But one thing, the machine was too cold and he wasn't getting penetration. Immediately, I can see that, see. So I said, okay. So what I had to do was, burn off all that weld that was cold, take it all off. And then finally, I stuck that pad eye up there and I just stuck it on there and put one bead of welding.

And the old man, Black, he says, "Pull it up." Man, that's one time in my life I prayed. I prayed, oh my God. This darn thing not even welded and he's pulling it up. And everybody standing around, wondering what's going to happen. I thought that darn thing would guarantee fly off and break. But it held, the good Lord took care of me. He made it so that it didn't break off. Soon as that thing was up there had emptied and it started to come down, boy, I was right on there welding again. I didn't give it a chance. But the point I'm making, what it did, all these workers and everything, it established a kind of reputation for me. You know what I mean? These guys had been looking at this guy trying to weld it and he couldn't do it.



WN: Was the guy older than you?

GK: Yeah, and I knew this guy because I had run into him at Inter-Island. Actually, he wasn't a really qualified welder. He was more of a riveter, riveter helper. I mean, he was good at it. Had it been a riveting job, he would've been perfect. But, I felt in a way kind of bad for him. I'm thinking, hey, I don't blame you. But the point I'm getting to is that, after that, they used to give me blueprints. And not too long after that, we had a job at Fort Shafter. They were building two warehouses for searchlights. And this guy, E. E. Black, I tell you, he was a "psychologist." He got a job, sixty-day contract to build this building. We had two buildings, the steel all fabricated in the Mainland. No, this job here, it wasn't fabricated. I had to fabricate the steel. So we were working at this job, like thirty days before completion, and if you're not completed on time there's a penalty. Man, he waits till thirty days, and then he starts the job. You know what that means, now everybody is on pressure, right? You under pressure. The superintendent on the job, he's in charge of the construction, he's on everybody's tail. "Get going!" I mean, he's cracking the whip. I'm thinking, wow, these guys. The things were just flying, in thirty days we finished two buildings.

WN: Where were the buildings?

GK: If you go up to Fort Shafter through the Kalihi gate, you get out there, there's a couple of buildings on the side. They were actually—come back to it now, the government, I think, was anticipating war. So they were bringing in searchlights, you know, to scan the skies in case whatever. And they had these two buildings to store searchlights. So, with my experience, and my knowledge of blueprint reading at Kamehameha, I was able to read blueprints. From there, the next job we started, Black had a job up Kamehameha Schools. And that boys' school up there, the whole bit, Black had the job, E. E. Black. First, he had the job to build the auditorium, he built that. Then he had this job to build the whole boys' school complex. See, the boys' school was down at the lower campus at Kalihi, so this thing was, they're going to move to upper school [i.e., Kapālama]. Black had the job. So I had the job to put in the structural steel, the roofing, the trusses, after they built the wall and the deck, then we put the roof on. And I had the job of mounting that, building that roof. I had a Japanese guy by the name of Jimmy somebody. I had to hire one more guy, two of us, because we had to be on schedule. When the job was done, we had to lay Jimmy off. Fortunately, Pearl Harbor was building up. They had Pacific Bridge come in, and now this is like 1939 right. Pacific Bridge had come in and was building this dry dock and they needed welders.

WN: Pacific Bridge was a company?

GK: Company, yeah. Pacific Bridge. They had a contract to build dry dock number 2 at Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard. In fact, they had dry docks number 2 and number 3 that they

were building. They were really shorthanded for welders, so. Before that job was completed at Kamehameha School, they had a guy by the name of Kendall and he was supposedly a structural engineer.

WN: Not Charles Kendall? HGEA [Hawai'i Government Employees Association]?

GK: No, not that one. This guy was different, but his name was Kendall. See, when I had gotten married, my wife's father was the head of the Territorial Department of Engineering. Designing buildings, you know, like Maui High School, Baldwin High School, Kaua'i [High] School. They were in the process of developing all these buildings, all these schools.

WN: What was his name?

GK: Harry K. Stewart. See, that was my first wife's father. He was head of the building department. He had guys by the name of Pung, different guys, engineers working with him. And then he made trips out here to these islands, and he knew a lot of people. In fact, my wife knew him real well. They'd have parties at the house. I was living at the house, my father-in-law's place. And one time, this guy came, Kendall, and I didn't know him then. This was prior to my meeting him. So I asked my father-in-law, who's this guy. So I asked him, "What about this guy?" I think I just met him at Kamehameha.

He said, "Oh, he's supposedly a structural engineer and stuff."

And I said, "Oh yeah?" He asked me why. I said, "Well, he's running the job up by—or trying to anyway—at Kamehameha Schools." He didn't really say it because my father-in-law was a Mason and a Shriner.

WN: Stewart?

GK: Stewart. And this guy, was kind of a Shriner, too, so you know, you don't bad mouth anybody. But from what he said, I put two and two together. I figure, this guy, not too *akamai*. And sure enough, because he would come to me and tell me about certain jobs. But anyway, after we finished Kamehameha School, we had another job down at Hawaiian Pine[apple Company]. Hawaiian Pine at that time, Dole Hawaiian Pine was going big time into canning, even to the extent they were going to manufacture their own boxes, crates. Prior to that, they had their own canning [plant] making cans, American Can [Company], and now they're going to make their own boxes. So Black had a job to build the warehouse for boxes. So I got involved in putting up the steel. And in those days, being a welder I was kind of a key man in the team. And this guy Kendall used to keep our time. You know, he'd have us working instead of eight hours, we'd work maybe one hour extra. Then at pay time, when we get our pay and figure the hours, hey, we short hours. We short like five hours, one hour a day. So one day, I told

the crane operator, Tony Alexander, I said, "Tony, you know, this is for the birds. I'm going to teach this guy a lesson. I going home early today." Four o'clock come, going home early.

So Tony said, "You go home, we all go home."

So everybody went home. E.E. Black comes, and he looks around, "Where's everybody?" He gets Kendall, "Oh George went home and everybody went home."

So, the next day I come to work—I work on the job [site], after the job finish, I go back to the shop. I work from, that time, maybe five o'clock to midnight, fabricating in the shop and all of that. So a couple of days later, Jack Jose tells me, he said, "You know, the old man said to fire you."

I said, "Is that right?"

He said, "Yeah."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "I don't know." So I put two and two together, I figure, well, okay. You know that guy Black, he used to pay guys in envelopes, cash in envelopes. Every Friday afternoon, after work, he passed out envelopes. One time I witnessed this old Portuguese guy was working, pushing the concrete buggy up on the barge, the old man took the envelope and threw it on the ground. Said, "John, you're not worth this money." You know, I felt real badly. To myself, I say, "You sucker, you'll never do that to me. I quit before you do that to me." I felt bad because this guy is a hard worker. He comes in the shop, he helps me. Good worker. And yet. . . .

So anyway—we finished that Dole job and then we were going to start another job. You go today to Pearl Harbor, on this side, as you get through the entrance, there's a building. And that was a Bank of Hawai'i. Black had the contract. And they were going to fabricate the steel in Hawai'i here. I had a guy by the name of Yoshi, he was a real top-notch carpenter. In fact, sometimes he was a foreman on the job. And so when we got the plans, I'm reading the plans, I tell him, "Hey, Yoshi, you look here these plans, these damn things are wrong."

He tell me, "Why?"

I say, "You read it."

After a while he says, "Yeah, you right."

Because from the hip, the main building, then you have purlins to tie into the hip. You know, how the building goes, fancy building, this Hawaiian-style roof. And the way he had it, instead of being vertical, it was on an angle like this. And you don't do that, it's supposed to be vertical.

In the meantime, my friend, working at Pacific Bridge, calls me at home and tells me, "You know, George, you got to come down here work." He said, "If you certified welder, you get paid dollar quarter an hour and all the overtime. If you are non-certified, dollar an hour. How can you miss? All the time you want."

So, anyway, I said, "Well, I'll see how it goes." But once when I first hired out to Black, I was paid fifty cents an hour. Now, this shows you how this contract is. I got fifty cents an hour. Lē'ahi Home was building a new building. At that time the U.S. government had scale for all these projects that—I've forgotten the name or the terminology—but they had money allotted to different states and these went to building public buildings. And so if you're on the job, on that project, the mechanics get dollar an hour; and journeymen, dollar an hour. If you're a laborer, you get fifty cents an hour. So now I'm getting fifty cents an hour, right? I'm working in the shop. They call me to go up work Lē'ahi Home, so I got up there and work up there.

WN: Where is Lē'ahi Home?

GK: At 13th Avenue, Kaimukī.

WN: Oh, the [Lē'ahi] Hospital?

GK: That's the hospital, right? I go up there work, and the timekeeper, "Okay, George, you here, you on the payroll now." I get dollar an hour, right? So, that couple of weeks like that, so finally I figure, "Hey, this is for the birds. I'm the same guy working here I get fifty [cents], go I up there, I get dollar. I should get a raise."

One afternoon I stop Mr. Black, I say, "You know, Mr. Black I have a problem."

He says, "What kind of problem you have?"

I say, "Mr. Black, I work here in the shop here, I get fifty cents an hour. I go up Lē'ahi Home work at that project up there with Mr. Soares, and I get paid dollar an hour." I said, "I think I need a raise." (Chuckles) Guts. I figure, what the hell, all he can do is fire me.

You know what he tells me? "That's the whole goddamn trouble with you guys. All you want is more money."

I say, "But, Mr. Black I'm the same man. I work here, I do good job here. I'm fabricating here, stuff that going up there. I say, "Same job. I work here and there, same job. I think I should get more money." Well, the next week, he raise me up real generous. Now I'm getting eighty-five cents an hour.

WN: You mean down below.

GK: Yeah, when I'm up there.

WN: You folks weren't union?

GK: No, we weren't union. In fact, that Inter-Island kind of put a stop on all unions. See, the sugar plantations they had their own, but this is professional, structural union. I'm trying to get the term that they use, different as opposed to laborers. You know, this is a professional skill workers union.

Like I said, getting back to these plans, when I saw the plans wrong, I figure, okay, time for me to leave now. Because I didn't want to get involved in the fabrication, and I didn't want to get involved in this kind. So I called my friend up, and I told him, "Yeah, okay, I'll come down to Pacific Marine." So I went down Pacific Marine. Not Pacific Marine, but Pacific Bridge at Pearl Harbor.

Now, working for E.E. Black, another thing that I wanted to get a raise was to work on these projects, these government projects, you had to be a certified welder. You could not work on these projects, the city, state, or whatever, without being a certified welder. So I was certified, qualified, so now I could do all these jobs. So when I went to Pearl Harbor to Pacific Bridge, the first thing they did, they sent me up to Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard shop to take a welder's test. I went up there, I met the guy, the instructor by the name of Sherforce. I remember all these things at my old age.

WN: What's his name?

GK: Sherforce.

WN: Sherforce?

GK: Sherforce. He says, "Okay, you can weld?"

I say, "I do a little bit of welding."

He says, "Okay, put the plates together." Test samples, and stuff. And so after we got it set up, he said, "Okay, put it on overhead." See, when you weld you have different positions. You weld in flat, it's easy, you weld vertical, that's a little more difficult. Then you weld overhead, you're underneath and you're welding. And that test involves

welding overhead, so I started the first bead. You go, you weld about eight inches right across and then you stop. Now you have to put in the other passes. So I stop, he tells me, "You can weld pretty good." He said, "Looks pretty good."

I said, "Well, I qualified in town."

He said, "Okay." So I wire brushed, chipped the scale off and wire brush it, and I put the other pass in. When I got through, he tells me, "George, you want to work at the shipyard here?" Now, they had not hired anybody yet in the shop, shop 1126, construction shop.

I said, "Well, how much money you pay here?" My mentality is money.

He says, "Well, they start with, \$1.06, then \$1.12, then \$1.18." Six cents more from one step, third, second, first—\$1.06, \$1.12, \$1.18.

I says, "But you know, Sherforce, I'm going to work down Pacific Bridge, I'll get paid if I'm regular, not certified, \$1.00. If I get certified it's \$1.25 and all the overtime.

He says, "Yeah, you right there, but the future is here in the shipyard." I had to weld another plate, test plate. You get two samples. So by the time I was getting ready to start the second sample, this guy shows up and he turns out to be the shopmaster. The guy who hires, he's in charge of the shop. He tells me, "Okay, Son, you going to come work for the shipyard?" I look at him, I think who the hell is this guy telling me.

I says, "I don't think so, if I pass the test I'm going to work for—"

He tells me, "That contract is for about two years, maybe three years." He says, "When that job finishes, and there will be no more jobs in town, you're going to be looking for a job. Then you're going to come back and asking me for a job." He said, "And you know what? I'm not going to hire you." It didn't take me long to figure this out. I'd been through being hired and fired a number of times already, I'm getting a little immune. I'm figuring, I got to make the right decision.

So I say, "What do I start at?"

He says, "Well, you're going to have to be starting at third class, \$1.06." And he says, "You know, you'll be here for the rest of your life."

So I says, "I guess, okay. I think I'll accept your offer." So I say, "When do I start?"

He says, "You can start Monday. I'll give you a note to give to the personnel office at the gate." So he gave me a note. So I never even started with Pacific Bridge.

WN: Oh, you never worked for Pacific Bridge?

GK: I never worked for Pacific Bridge because they sent me up there and I never went back. Came Monday, when I reported that Monday at the front gate, this girl asked me, "What are you here for?"

I said, "Well, I got a note here from"—his name was Tulloch—"Mr. Tulloch."

She says, "And what is it for?"

I says, "I'm supposed to be hired for shop 1126."

She says, "We're not hiring anybody." At that time, that was before the war.

WN: Nineteen forty.

GK: Nineteen forty. And so, she said, "We're not hiring anybody." So I said, "I have a note here from Mr. Tulloch." So she called the shop and they told them, "Yeah, this guy is the first one to be hired." So you know, I was there December 7th when the war broke out.

WN: Maybe we can get to that the next time.

GK: Okay.

WN: I think that's another chapter. This is a good place to end. A couple questions, what were the circumstances of you leaving E.E. Black, again? He never fired you, though?

GK: No, he did not fire me. In fact, I left. Because, you see, what happened, they had somebody else fabricate the steel. If I had done it, it was incumbent upon me to correct it, to bring it to the attention of the proper engineers that it was wrong, the plan was wrong. But I figured, well, this guy so-called screwed me, gave me the business. I figure, okay, I'm going to see what's going to happen. So when I left, a couple months later I get a call from E.E. Black. He says, "George, we want you to come back to the shop."

"Under what conditions?"

He says, "Well, we'll make you the foreman of the shop." Steel side. Jack would be the overall taking care of mechanics and everything. "We'll make you the foreman of the fabricating, steel side, and we'll give you an increase in pay." So I knew what was up, because they had fabricated the steel according to the plans and it was wrong. They were having problems assembling it. I figured, if I go back, I knew what was involved. Then when I went to see the shop, Mr. Ellis, told them I wanted to leave, he wouldn't let me go.

He told me, “No. You hired here, you’re going to stay here. We need you.”

So, I went home one day, and there was this guy who was Winne, his name was. He was one of the big time superintendents of all superintendants for E.E. Black. And he was in the house, he says, “Okay, George, you going to come back tomorrow?”

I says, “No, Mr. Winne. I’m sorry, but I’m not.” Boy, he went out of the house and he slammed the door.

And when I was working for the shipyard and at the end of the war, they started to cut back. And us guys, who had worked in the shipyard and were not veterans, we got laid off. So, again, like you say, it’s another chapter. Again, I was looking for another job. Next time we can start that, so I’ve been—and I had to make some real drastic decisions. Plus, after a while the Korean War broke out and then there’s the shipyard now scrambling for workers to come back. So first time, I said, “No.” Second time, I said, “Okay. I’m going to be supervisor, okay.” And then I’m looking down the road, I’m seeing the Korean War going to end pretty soon, and you know what? I had to leave my family for two years. I made a decision to join the navy to get veteran’s preference, to solidify my future.

WN: This is when? World War II?

GK: Yeah, after. During the Korean War, 1953. But anyway, like you say, we’ll talk about this. I’m giving you a lot of info, is that okay? Too much?

WN: We’re just astounded by your memory.

GK: You know, I did things. And you try to teach the young kids about things that happen. When I was a kid, I’m looking, I used to work with people, and I admire certain characteristics about this person. I would ask them—I’m stupid enough to go up to this guy, of course I get to know the guy. I would say, “Mel, you really gung-ho guy, top shape and all that, what do you do to do that?” And I would learn. They tell me what they did, what they did in their lifestyle and everything, and I would imitate it. Like, for example, the shipyard is such a big place. I graduated from Kam School, I ended up equivalent to an engineer in my position. I went to the University [of Hawai’i] when I came out of the service, and I started, but then trying to raise a family, family life, studying all that, plus responsibility at work, I had to give it up after about six months, I think, at the university. But there’s different things that you can learn in life, reading books and stuff, and whatever. So, when I retired from the shipyard after about thirty-four years, I was head of the methods and standards branch. It was a good job, an equivalent to an engineer making retirement pay.

WN: And you were valedictorian, right? Kamehameha.



GK: Yeah, I was valedictorian.

WN: Did you have any idea of going to college?

GK: Okay, this is interesting. This is why I say, one of the things, in my life, I think that I could have been dead a long time ago. About the last week of school, in fact, I was called in by the principal again, Dr. [Homer] Barnes. He says, "You know, come Monday, you report to Dr. Fox at Punahou School." That's it. Never told me anything about what to expect. I'm a stupid guy, I should have asked him why. But no, I figured okay, I don't question my superiors. So I went up there, I caught the streetcar from Kalihi, I went up there, I walked all the way up to Punahou School. I get up there, I asked the secretary, I wanted to see Dr. Fox. She went in, "What was your name?" I gave her my name, okay. I went in to see Dr. Fox. Dr. Fox, after he met me, he says, "Well, we are prepared to offer you a scholarship to the University of California." I'm not trying to put on anything, but you know, that's a fact. I look at this guy, wow, University of California. In my mind, I'm thinking, how many men who graduated from Kamehameha are at the University of California. If there had been somebody there, I figure, I can meet up there, he can show me the ropes. You know, fine. So I asked him. We had people, friends, classmates, and graduates at San Jose State and one other university up there.

So I asked him, "Can I go to San Jose State instead?" because we had three or four boys up San Jose. He said, "No, this scholarship applies only to the University of California."

WN: This is Berkeley?

GK: Berkeley. So at that time, you know, this was depression years. My family was hardly getting by in terms of financial ability, and so my father was working hard and everything. Quickly in my mind, I'm thinking, if I went up there I need clothes, I need to do this, I need to do that, I need spending money. Who's going to give me spending money? How am I going. . . . See, nobody explained that to me. We never had counselor in Kamehameha School those days. Had there been somebody to say, "Look George, you have these options. You can go there. You have scholarships, you can borrow money from." Anyway, that scholarship went to my number two boy in the class, Victor Jacobson. He ended up going to University of California. When the war broke out, Victor Jacobson eventually enlisted in the air force. We had another classmate of ours, Stewart Markham who went to San Jose, and he went into the air force. Victor Jacobson got killed in the war, Stewart Markham got killed after the war. He was in the barracks taking care of the barracks, all of a sudden some guy stabbed him. So my mentality tells me that if I had been at that time, in the university . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

## SIDE TWO

GK: . . . in the air force and I could have been killed. The way I look at it, I shouldn't be here today because I would have been dead.

WN: So, if you would have been in school when the war broke out, you would have joined the air force.

GK: I would have joined the air force, definitely. That would have been the way to go. If Victor did it and Stewart did it, and they were both classmates. We were the three of the top students. I would definitely, at the head of class, if I could have volunteered for the air force.

WN: Because '37 you graduated. So by 1941 you would have still been right about . . .

GK: I would have been at the school, senior by then.

WN: So because you didn't go university, and by that time you were working shipyard. Was that like what do you call that?

GK: We were deferred here.

WN: Defense job.

GK: Defense employees, so you know, everybody frozen.

WN: Essential worker.

GK: Essential worker, yeah. In fact, we had admirals come to the shipyard. I was in charge of one section of the shop, fabricating parts for the ships and stuff. All these admirals come through. They say, "Wow, what you folks are doing here is amazing. You're keeping the fleet fit to fight out there," and all that. "You got a job here for life." That's what they told us. And I was naïve enough to believe them, until I got kicked out of the shipyard, got caught in the RIF [Reduction in Force]. But, I come back to the fact that if I had been at the University of California and joined the air force, I would have been killed. Guaranteed, I would have been killed. Because if those guys got killed, I wouldn't have been any different. I would definitely have been killed, too.

So I can't complain. I'm telling you two guys, I can't complain. Because in my lifetime I've gone through experiences that, hey, look at it, I'm here on the beach here, wonderful. Go out there and swim, enjoy it all. Right, Warren? In life, you look for someday being able to—in fact, when I was a kid growing up I used to say—and we lived near a river—I would say I would either be near a river or on an ocean. And one of the things I said when I was a young man was, "Someday I would like to visit Europe."

But, before I retired Pearl Harbor, because I wanted job security, I went to work and I was working part-time for Pacific Marine.

WN: This is after you retired from Pearl Harbor?

GK: In fact, I was working from before. Because of that experience I had been laid off, I figured I better secure my position. You know, look for a job out there in case I get laid off. So, my wife got sick and needed—my first wife—needed an air-conditioner, so I was in the planning department. I asked an electrician, Lou, I said, “Ey, I got to buy an air-conditioner. Do you know where I can buy one?”

He said, “Here, I call this guy for you. You go down see him.” Fred Loui was head of Pacific Marine.

So I went down that Saturday and bought the machine.

He said, “It’s not in yet. It’s coming in tomorrow, Monday, and I’ll hold it for you.” So when I went down there to get the machine, he said, “A doctor friend came in, I had to give him the machine, but I’ll give you a bigger machine and save money.” Double capacity. So I’m looking around in the shop, you know Pier 13, eh? Where it is in Honolulu, Pier 13. Half that building was police department parking, half the building they had this shop. Small shop, you know. So when I came down to get this air-conditioner, hey, it’s too big to get in my car now. I told Fred, “I can’t get it in my car.”

He said, “No, this guy, my brother, will take it home for you.” So we did, went all the way to Kalihi.

When I came back to the shop, I told him, “What do you guys do here?” I’m looking at his shop and it’s too small for a tool room, I’m looking at Pearl Harbor versus. And he says, “We repair ships,” and all of that. Repair ships?

(Laughter)

But, anyway, I saw Fred Loui on the way out and I said, “Thanks for the machine.” But I say, “You know, if you ever get in a position where you need to repair, do some work,” I said, “I can do welding, fitting.” And you know, I’ll be damned. Next Sunday comes along, I get a call Sunday morning, “George Kahanu.”

“Yeah.” He said, “I want to see you down the shop here.”

“Who’s this?”

“Fred Loui.”

"Okay."

So I go down and he says, "You know we got a ship in, it has to be repaired." A Liberty ship, right in the front of the bridge is a crack in the first two plates. So we go down, during the war that was piece of cake. We did a lot of these. What we did, we put a Dutch strap on the side and we put a Dutch strap on the top, and we box it so that it's strong. Because they overloaded ships and when they flex like that in the water, the damn thing cracks. So, I had worked on a lot of this. I told Fred. He says, "What do you think of it?"

I say, "That's a piece of cake, nothing to it, all straight work."

He say, "How long would take you to fix it?"

I say, "If that's all, at the most three weeks."

He look at me, he say, "You crazy."

I said, "No, in fact maybe less than that." I said, "Why?"

He said, "Dillingham wants two months to fix it." Now, you know anybody with common sense, right? This guy is saying he's going to do it for three weeks and Dillingham, who the hell is right here? This guy is out of his mind, right?

I said, "We did a lot of this at Pearl Harbor." You know at that time, when you fool around a commercial ship, first you get insurance people, then you get ABS—American Bureau of Shipping, then you get coast guard, and then you get about four different entities. Different people get involved in the commercial vessel. You got to suit the requirements of all these guys. They're in there, they're looking at you and how you're going to do it and blah blah blah. And so, when Fred Loui went back and he took me back to the shop and I went home, I got home and couple of hours later I got the word, "Ey, George, you got the job."

WN: (Chuckles) So you still working Pearl Harbor at the time?

GK: I'm still working Pearl Harbor.

WN: When did you have time to repair the ship in three weeks?

GK: Well, I tell you, I was in the planning department. I talked to my boss, Jimmy Marciel. I said, "Jimmy, I got a challenge in town."

He said, "What you got to do?"

I said, "There's a ship in town that needs to be repaired" I said, "I want to take one week off."

One week off, no problem because we were kind of slow. That's why I made the comment. I told Fred Loui, "If we go, you know how we going to do it? We going to do it in two shifts." Two twelve-hour shifts. So instead of going one month, we're going to cut it down to half because we working two shifts per day, right, instead of one shift. One shift, you go twice as long. So anyway, we had some incidents happen, but, what I did, immediately I went to contact the best structural people in the shipyard. I saw my friends, during the war we worked together, and they were hepped up for a challenge like this. I said, "Hey, Dave" and I had a guy, a riveter, Caesar Paision. Big wrestler boy, bull, and he was a riveter. And I had a Chinese guy by the name of Awana working down there.

They told me, "George, when you ready, you let us know. We come down."

I says, "Okay. Give me your phone number and everything."

I signed up all these guys up that I needed. The drillers, when you rivet—because this ship was partly riveted. Partly riveted and part welded.

WN: When was this?

GK: This was back about, before or after, about the '60s, I think. That job, when Pacific Marine did that job, that put them on the map. Because prior to that, they were, like I said, a bicycle shop. But when they did that job, now, the word got around. Hey, we got an outfit in town that can do jobs. So, every time that we had a job, I would get people out of the shipyard. I would get the best out of the shipyard. They know me, so I say, "Hey, we go down." I give them bonus pay, and when they finish the job, give them bonus. Fred Loui would have chop suey for us, all the guys who did the job. He appreciated. See, the advantage was, he didn't have to keep people on the payroll when he didn't need them.

WN: Because you guys were all working.

GK: All our guys. So when we came in the evening, like we would start from maybe six to midnight. A lot of guys came down. And if they took vacation, they can work. Anyway, a lot of things happened that were really interesting.

WN: Let me turn it off.

END OF INTERVIEW

Tape Nos. 38-10-3-02 and 38-11-3-02

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

George Kahanu, Sr. (GK)

May 2, 2002

Kū'au, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN) and Ty Tengan (TT)

WN: Okay, we're interviewing George Kahanu on May 2, 2002. We're at his home in Kū'au, Maui. Interviewers are Warren Nishimoto and Ty Tengan.

Okay, George, let's start with a question about your childhood in Kalihi. What was it like growing up over there?

GK: Well, I tell you, Kalihi, it was a happy place for me. We had boys in the area who were about my age and some a little older. And you know what, we had boys of different racial extraction. There's no such thing as racial differences or anything. My good friend I had, across the street from where I lived, was a Portuguese. Down the street was a Chinese, and this guy is still alive today, fortunately. Jimmy Chung. And then behind us, one block in back of their place, was the Kaulukukui family. I think he was about number four in line, Eddie was a real good friend of mine. He and I were real buddies. And then up the street a little bit there was this Japanese guy, Tomo. I've forgotten his last name, but his father one time worked on the stevedores on the waterfront and was a good wrestler, a Japanese wrestler. So Tomo was—you look at a Japanese boy, you think he's Japanese. But no, he was built tough. He had the build of, well, again, like his dad, a wrestler. And then up the street was another Japanese guy and he was kind of small, typical Japanese stature. Not too big. So all of us in a gang would get together and play. The sports we played—baseball. You need more than one, right? So we'd have a baseball team, we'd play.

WN: Where did you folks play?

GK: Well, we had, next to my place where I lived, was an empty lot. And if we played small time, we played there. Otherwise, we used to go up to Kam[ehameha] School, and the school field was open so we played in that field. On Gulick Avenue, where I lived on King and Gulick, up to Kam School, I would say, maybe, was about less than a mile. So

we'd walk. No problem walking up there. Or there was another park—Kalihi Waena Park, up—and that's across from Kalihi Waena School. And so we'd go up there, play baseball up there.

But we made up all kinds of games. We'd have track meets, and that was running around the block. (WN and TT laugh.) Or playing football. In fact, I forgot to mention, but Bill Pacheco was a good football player in the later years, he lived near where the Kaulukukuis lived. So Bill was one of our guys who played within the group.

WN: Did he kick in those days? Did he kick the ball?

GK: No, well, not really. He was more like a halfback. Bill was a real, real tough guy. I mean, when he played, he went all out. And not only that, in the back of where we lived was the Kalihi Stream. And down back of the Kaulukukuis was where the swimming pool was. So we'd go down there and swim in the pool. In fact, we made a raft from [where] O'ahu Railroad [i.e., O'ahu Railway and Land Company] was rebuilding the bridge. In those days, the (track) bridge went from Kalihi all the way down to Pālama. And that was primarily for the sugarcane hauling. And so they were rebuilding the bridge, and we went down there one day and kind of borrowed a whole pile of lumber to make a raft.

(Laughter)

WN: When you say "swimming pool," that's just a pool in the river.

GK: In a river, yeah. It was a pool in the river. Part of the river.

WN: How deep was it?

GK: Oh, must have been about six feet deep.

WN: Wow.

GK: Yeah. It was a nice pool. Big enough for us to wade in anyway. And back of that was a farm and a dairy. Antone Joe's [Joseph's] dairy. And that's where we got our milk from. If we wanted milk, I would walk down a couple of blocks and go to the dairy and pick up milk. Buy it by the gallons, you know. And just before that was the Chinese farm where they raised vegetables.

(Telephone rings. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: You're talking about "Antone Joe" [i.e., Antone Joseph, owner of the dairy].

GK: Yeah. And they had the dairy, and the benefit—the Chinese farm was right next, so they would get the droppings from the dairy cows and they would use that for fertilizer on the vegetables, the vegetable gardens. So they had a good kind of balance. Good situation. And not too far from it was a slaughterhouse. So there we are, meat is available. And where we lived, one block down, was a *poi* factory, and they had Chinese who did the *poi*, grind the *poi*. So we had all what we wanted within the area.

WN: Were there *lo'i* out there?

GK: At that time, at my young age, there was, because up where School Street is, that area in there, Kam IV Road and that area there, used to be all *lo'i* in there. And the water would come from up Kalihi Uka, down the stream, and they divert the water to the *lo'is*. So Kalihi had everything within. So we had whatever we wanted. The bakery was not too far down, Love's Bakery. And if we walked down there, we'd get day-old bread for like—at that time, bread was like ten cents a loaf—so you go down there, you get day-old bread, they give you like three for dime because it's old bread, supposedly. But nothing wrong with it, it's good bread.

WN: This was up Middle Street? Love's Bakery?

GK: No, it was down by Iwilei. Down that far. But we used to walk that far, no problem. Walk on the railroad track all the way down. In fact, kids, we used to go down at Kapālama, there was a Houston Arena for boxing. And that's where they had the fights down in Pālama. They had Houston Arena down there with all the fights.

WN: Near the [Kapālama] Canal, yeah?

GK: Yeah, near the canal, exactly. That was like a cane field in there, and this darn thing was more or less in the middle of the cane field. But we'd go down there and jump over the fence to watch the fights. (Chuckles)

WN: I heard about Houston Arena, but I've never seen any pictures.

GK: That's where it was, right there where the canal is. So as kids, we went up to Kamehameha Field, see football games. We went to see the fights down there at Houston Arena. And it was great. That's with the group of boys in the area.

Now, with my dad, he was kind of a energetic guy, and we would—like sometimes on a weekend, he'd say, "What do you say we go get some crab?" And so I used to look forward to going to catch crabs because down there where the O'ahu Prison [today, O'ahu Community Correctional Center] is, was a railroad track. And if you went down Pu'uhale Road, and then down to where the railroad tracks, and you follow the tracks, it went down to, beyond that, was a swamp area. And that was the Damon Estate, and



Damon had these fishponds. But the train track went right through the fishpond, so to catch crab all you had to do was either go to the market and get fish eggs or you get old meat at the store—tell them you want old meat for crabs. And you'd buy a chunk of meat—and then you'd go down there, and you'd tie it on a string, about an eight-foot string. You let the meat go out by the tide and the crabs would get on it, and then you would drag it in, and with a scoop net, you'd scoop it up. So it was plentiful, those days. I mean, crabs . . .

WN: Did you have those crab nets back then?

GK: Well, no. We had some, but this was easy. We didn't have to pack the crab nets and all of that. You just pulled it in and then you scoop it up.

WN: You're catching it one at a time then.

GK: Yeah, one at a time. Sometimes, get two of them hang on, and you get two at a time. But like you said, ultimately we had crab nets because you figured out, okay, the problem with crab nets were where the water wasn't too deep. You were on like shallow water right from the train track, and the water was relatively shallow. So if you pull the net in, it would incline to tip because you hit the bottom too soon. But some of areas were kind of deep where the stream ran. If you were over there, then it would be deeper, then you could use the net without any problem. So if you there, about an hour you get a container full. Maybe like a gallon-sized container, or two gallons. And you go home and that's enough for a meal. Everybody enjoy crab. So we did that.

Beyond that was the—at that time they had where they made Hawaiian salt, the salt beds were down in that area. The road that led to the salt beds, we had the crematorium where they cremated bodies. And so that was one area. Beyond that, you went down, it was a state hospital [Kalihi Hospital and Detention Station] where they supported or serviced the Kalaupapa patients. Patients would go from Kalihi and take the boats, whatever, and then they would take them to Kalaupapa.

That Kalihi area had a lot of activities for young people. Even my dad and I, we used to be heavy into drinking Hawaiian herbal tea. And the tea was *ko'oko'olau*. So what we'd do, we'd hike all the way up to Kalihi Valley and ultimately up above into Nu'uano Valley. This *ko'oko'olau* was kind of a small bush. You just break off the stems, the leaves. Then you get a bag full. The way you'd do it, when you come back, what we do is leave it in a gunnysack and hang it up to dry. And when it dried, all you did was break up sprigs of it and then put it in hot water, and you get good Hawaiian herbal tea. That's *ko'oko'olau*. Now, I attribute my so-called good health, my mentality tells me that maybe the reason why I'm so fortunate to be in such good health is (because of) those things I ate in the early days. We never ate any so-called junk food. Everything was good,

wholesome food, which I enjoyed. Of course, we didn't know any better about any hamburgers or McDonald's. There was no such thing around. So we had these things that we did.

WN: So what was your diet like? What kinds of things besides the herbal teas? What did you folks eat most of the time?

GK: Well, my mother was half Chinese. And she had been born and raised on the Big Island. And her mother was pure Chinese. No, her mother was pure Hawaiian. And her dad was Chinese. So my mother ended up being in that kind of situation. At that time the Chinese men did a lot of the cooking. These guys who had come working on the plantation, they were pretty smart. So as a result, my mother was a good cook. She could take a small piece of meat and a lot of vegetables—like I would go down to the farm when the Chinese were harvesting the vegetables, they would wash it and separate it. A lot of times they had a lot of vegetables left over, off-grade, that couldn't sell. So you went down there and they'd give it to you. They tell you, "Ah, this five cents, ten cents." And so as a result, we had a lot of vegetables. My mother did a lot of stir frying. So we had just a little bit meat or we had our own chicken, we raised our own chicken. Most of the people did in those days. Eventually, we even raised rabbits.

So when it came to food, we liked certain Chinese food, and one of them was *harm ha*. You know *harm ha*? Well, my dad, he didn't like *harm ha*. My mother cooked *harm ha*, he'd tell her, "Throw it away," when he got home. So as a result, we'd have a big lunch like once a week, and that consisted of *lup chong*, salt eggs, and a *harm ha* dish. And we had to have it during the day when he wasn't around.

(Laughter)

But you know how *harm ha* taste? *Harm ha* taste pretty good. Really, we loved *harm ha*. Like I said, my mother was a good cook. She could take, with hardly any ingredients, she would work up a meal. So like in those days, you get twenty-five cents, you can buy a big piece of meat. You go down for *poi*, twenty-five cents, you get a big bag of *poi*.

We had an icebox, and those days you had regular ice. And where we lived, the road was kind of bumpy. So the deliveryman for ice will be coming along in the morning and it'd be bumping along the road and the chunk of ice (would) fall down (off the trucks). So in the morning, we'd make sure we got up early in the morning and go check if any ice fell off the truck.

(Laughter)

And if it did, usually, usually about every other day, we'd get a chunk of ice that fell off the truck.

WN: What would you do with the ice?

GK: Oh, we had this small wooden icebox.

WN: Oh, you would pick it? I see.

GK: Yeah. So we put it in the icebox. But ordinarily, there wasn't too much food to put in the icebox. I mean, whatever you cooked, you ate all of it. So we really didn't need icebox. You need to preserve food if you had too much food, but . . .

WN: You said wooden icebox. What was that like?

GK: Well, it was made out of wood. Stood up so high. Two compartments on top where the ice was. You had a lid that you raised and dropped the ice in.

WN: On the top?

GK: On the top. And then down below you had a cooler. Also on the top, you could put—on the side along the ice—put bottles and milk. One of the things that we had to refrigerate mostly was milk. But the milk, being fresh right from the cow, more or less, it lasted several days without spoiling right away. So you didn't need too much refrigeration. Like I said, there was hardly any food to refrigerate. What you got, you prepared, cooked, and ate every bit of it. Whatever you were served, you couldn't waste. The word was, what you were served, you eat everything on your dish. And usually, our parents knew enough to give us enough food without us asking for more or without wasting anything. So it was a good situation.

WN: How often would the iceman come?

GK: Like every other day.

WN: Oh, every other day?

GK: Yeah. About every other day because ice never lasted too long really. Because the iceboxes were not built like today where you got fiberglass and all of that. In those days you just had the wood itself and sheet metal inside. And that's what I recall of the icebox. But then even in the food, you had something like that safe there, where you put food in something like that and kept the food, basically, so the flies couldn't get to it. But we had what they call a "safe." And a safe is where you put the food.

WN: Was it like screened?

GK: Yeah, had screen on it. So it was something like that. In fact, people say that if you see a safe like that, it's an antique, a relic. So you can imagine, if you had a safe, you put the

food in there. Even like *poi*, we had *poi*. *Poi* didn't have to be refrigerated. You could just leave the *poi* outside and just cover it.

One of the things I remember about my young days was the fact that we never closed the door. We never locked the door. One time I asked my dad about it. I said, "How come we don't close the door or lock it?"

He says, "Nah, if anybody comes in, they're probably hungry, and they wanted something to eat." So they can come in and the *poi* was on the table, and the safe was right near it, and they could help themselves. Of course, I don't ever recall anybody coming in like that, but at that time of the night we'd be sleeping.

And another thing that I remembered vividly was the fact that when we went to bed it was usually early in the evening. Maybe we'd have a visitor come in from the outside islands, neighbor islands, come down to Honolulu, and they would stop over the house and talk story. Pretty soon, my dad and my mother would tell them, "Hey, you might as well stay over. It's kind of late." So when we had strangers come in, they would get the bed, and we would end up being on the floor, on a blanket, of course. I mean, that was the Hawaiian culture in those days. Open, giving. If anybody wanted anything, okay, help yourself. Take it. No problem.

After I got old enough, I went to Kalihi Waena School. Several of us boys, same class, ended up in the same class in Kalihi Waena School. And then from Kalihi Waena we graduated and went down to Kalākaua Junior High. At that time it was junior high. At Kalākaua, it was students from Pālama, from Kalihi, Kalihi Uka, Kalihi Waena, and Kalihi Kai. You know, when you get boys, they look around and say who's the tough guy in the group. And so we had athletic instructor, physical ed instructor, Jimmy Mitchell. You folks probably . . .

WN: African American yeah?

GK: Yeah, Jimmy Mitchell. So he was a tall guy, very athletic, and pretty clever. So what he'd do, he'd tell us, "Okay, Friday, you guys bring old clothes. We're going to play football." So they'd choose our teams. The Pālama (kids) played Kalihi or mixed the boys up. And boy, we all looked forward to that. We used to play not touch, but tackle. And so when you tackle, part of the deal was, they throw blows.

(Laughter)

GK: You know, underneath. So when the game is over, you know who's a pretty tough guy. Who should be the leader of the group, so-called, because if you're a good football player, good athlete, chances are you're good in everything else. So we used to have, even at that level, we had a good time. Then we had a regular football team that we

challenged, like Washington Intermediate played Kalākaua or Kaimukī. And we had that kind of a football team with the regular shoes and everything. Full equipment.

WN: So you folks were after the days of the barefoot football? You folks didn't play barefoot football?

GK: Well, barefoot football, they did have that. Barefoot football. I remember that we had Kalihi football team at that time, and it was called the Kalihi Thundering Herd. And where we were, Kalihi Waena Park was where they practiced. And then Pālama had a team, and Kaka'ako, and Pawa'a were the four teams. Pawa'a, Pālama, Kalihi, and I mentioned . . .

WN: Kaka'ako Sons, eh?

GK: Yeah, Kaka'ako Sons. And we had good players playing. Kalihi had—did Benny Ahakuelo play for Kalihi?

WN: I think so.

GK: And we had another guy who was a Portuguese guy. He was a fantastic punter. Man, that guy could kick. I can't recall the name. But anyway, we had a barefoot team, but that league was—well, there was a weight limit. Those guys who didn't make the senior league, the university league, and the Town Team and those guys, those guys played in the barefoot league. And that was a pretty good league, exciting league. I mean, lot of action. So at times, when these guys got good enough, they advanced to the senior league, which consisted of—they had teams like university, Town Team, oh, several others that played big-time football.

WN: This was with shoes though? This is not the barefoot?

GK: No, the senior league played in regular outfits. University played, at that time, that was just Tommy Kaulukukui, and Tony Morse them came in after that. They were there about 1938, I think. Thirty-seven, '38, I think. Tommy, and Tony Morse.

WN: Hiram Kaakua.

GK: Yeah, Hiram Kaakua. Hiram Kaakua played for Town Team. In fact, Kamehameha had Johnny Kerr playing, Rusty Blaisdell. Some of these guys, on the line, they had Jimmy Clark, [Norman] Kauaihilo. In fact the Wise boys played football at that time, too, from Kamehameha.

WN: Kamehameha played in the same league as university?

GK: No, Kamehameha had Kamehameha alumni team. We played in the high school league. When I was at Kalākaua, this friend of mine lived near we lived, Johnny Chung, he went from Kalākaua, he went to Honolulu Vocational. And then from there he went to university. And from university he went into the medical field and he went to Marquette University. And when the war broke out, Johnny, eventually, his whole class was called into the army. And being Chinese and speaking a little Chinese, he was sent to China. But at my station at that time, back in the '30s, I used to look at John as somebody that I wanted to emulate. I thought, well, okay when I finish Kalākaua, I would go to vocational. But one day being in the senior class in Kalākaua, ninth-grade, I got called to go see Mrs. Awai. And she was a music director. She was a pure Hawaiian, and a big husky *wahine*. And I went to see her. I said, "Yes, Mrs. Awai. You want to see me?"

She said, "Yeah." She says, "You know, tomorrow Kamehameha Schools is going to send some instructors down here and they're going to interview Hawaiian boys." She says, "And I think you should be interviewed Saturday."

I told her, "Well, I don't have any ideas about going to Kamehameha. I'm going to go to vocational school."

She tells me, "You better be here tomorrow. If I hear Monday that you didn't come to the interview, you're going to hear from me." So I figured, well, she was a pretty tough girl. She could handle herself. She wasn't afraid to move you around if she had to. So I came and I attended the interview. There was about ten of us.

WN: Did you know any of the ten?

GK: Yeah. We were in the same (class). In fact, sad to say, one of my good classmates—this guy was Charlie Kaninau—he passed away just about two weeks ago.

WN: Oh really?

GK: Yeah, Charles Kaninau. I was reading the paper. But anyway, we had this guy Charlie Kaninau, we had Albert Akana, Jake Nahalea. But ten of us were interviewed, and of the ten, I think about [eight] of us were accepted to go to Kamehameha. We didn't know at that time who was going to be accepted.

WN: You folks were all Kalākaua?

GK: Yeah, all Kalākaua. And so when we were notified, I told my mother about it, and she didn't know about it. I didn't tell them about going to. . . . At that time, another factor that I considered was, I looked at Kamehameha as costing some money. And if I went to vocational school, it was like free, another public school. So when I was accepted, what I

did, across from where I lived was this George Armano who worked at CPC Cannery. So I wasn't quite old enough, but I was big enough so I went to see Mr. Armano about getting a job at the cannery because I figured I needed to make money. And so he told me, "Okay. You work on the night shift with me." So which was great because I would go across the street and go to work with him and then I would come home with him. So during the summer I made enough money to go to Kamehameha. And at that time, Kamehameha School at that time was 99 percent full-time boarding. If you were a day student, it was exceptional because there was no room. But actually, it was a boarding school. So it cost \$63.50 to be a boarder.

WN: This is just the board or is this tuition, too?

GK: Boarder, and then about uniforms and stuff like that, came another ten bucks. I don't know, few odd dollars. I think less than a hundred bucks, you could go to school for a year. I mean, it was that inexpensive. Plus, the fact that if you couldn't afford the whole bill, you could get a scholarship. I got half a scholarship. And what it amounted to was (to clean) around the dormitories, you know, cutting the grass, pulling the weeds, really kind of yard maintenance kind of activity. So after school, you put in one hour or two hours of work. And they would keep track of it. Maybe, you'd have to put in twenty-five hours for the semester. So you keep track and when you get twenty-five hours, that took care of your tuition. Or fifty hours, whatever. So it was very, very inexpensive going to Kamehameha.

WN: You know the ten that you were talking about? The ten boys.

GK: Yeah.

WN: And you were all at Kalākaua?

GK: Yeah.

WN: Were you folks all pretty good students? Do you know why the ten of you and not others?

GK: Well, you hit the nail on the head when you said we were pretty good students because what they did was, of the boys with Hawaiian [blood], they selected what they thought would be eligible and would qualify and make a good enough impression to be selected. So that's what it was. We had ten of us, which in our classes, we were like top students. But we're not measuring against the other nationalities. Just amongst the Hawaiians, they picked up the ten most qualified to ultimately go to Kamehameha.

TT: How many of those ten actually got in?

GK: About eight of us got in.

WN: Did you take a test or anything like that?

GK: No, everything was strictly an oral interview.

WN: Oh. Do you remember what they asked you?

GK: Well, no. There must have been some—I think there was some written test, too. There was written and oral because, yeah, we were in there longer than that. The test took about half a day. In the morning, we started about, must have been about eight, nine o'clock, and we got through about eleven o'clock. And they asked you different—you know, your family history, were you interested in going to Kamehameha, different—kind of difficult to recollect. But anyway, it was something to do with—we had to write, I think, an essay, too. That was important. So even when we went to Kamehameha School, after we entered Kamehameha, Kamehameha had like a A section, and a B section. So some of us were placed in the A and some of us in the B section.

TT: Was that depending on your . . .

GK: I guess, yeah, depending on your whatever grade was at that test. So I ended up being in the A section. Charlie was in the A section, too. This friend of mine. Charlie Kaninau.

WN: Oh, Kaninau.

GK: Kaninau, yeah. Charlie was from Pālama, and he ended up being our quarterback on our football team. I think one of the requirements, one of the methods that they used to select the boys, was the fact that if you were physically able to participate in sports. Because even those days Father [Kenneth] Bray used to come up to Kalākaua and scout the football games, our games, and get students to attend 'Iolani. Out of Kalihi he did that. And Kamehameha had pretty strict requirements for academic requirements, and attitude, et cetera. Because some of the guys, when you come back to school, September, certain ones would be missing, and you would wonder how come. What happened? Well, they ended up going to 'Iolani. Like we had Ray Taylor was not in my class, a couple years after, and he ended up going to 'Iolani, being a good football player over there. But that was part of the requirements, that you were able to participate in sports.

One of the things about Kamehameha, too, those days, when you went to the dining room to have your meals, we sat at a round table like this. And at that table we had eight boys, (a waiter), and an instructor. Ten of us at a table. And the instructor was the one that did the serving. First you'd have salad, then the main dish, and stuff. Well, when we first got in there, our first day at Kamehameha, for lunch, all of us, eight of us, were kind of clannish because we were going into a new environment, not knowing anybody.



So we all stuck along together. So when we got into the dining hall, it was kind of late. We were looking around for empty spaces. There were no empty spaces. The only empty space was this table that was against the wall way on the Kalihi side of the dining room. And nobody there. It was vacant. So well, I guess we got no choice. So we went to the table and all these students, they are looking at us and kind of snickering. So right away, we suspected something kind of, you know, not too happy right?

And finally, this guy comes in. He's Mr. Lowrie, (an instructor). We called him "Bulldog," and he was a tough guy. He'd come walking in, you know. And he was kind of elderly. So, "Hi boys. Now what's your name?" Everybody told him our name. And you know, he was a disciplinarian in every way. He taught us the proper way to use your utensils, how you had to eat. In fact, a lot of the tables, they would serve, and they would serve half the food. They divided it so that four boys would get it, and then the waiter would take the dish and go back behind the dining room and get a refill and come back and then the other four would be served. So twice the food. Our table, Mr. Lowrie would serve all ten with that. If you wanted dessert, he said, "Everybody, you had to eat everything on the dish you ate." So we got kind of indoctrinated early into good eating habits, which ultimately I appreciated because we learned something. And that's one of the things about Kamehameha. It was like a family situation. You had teachers there who were interested in your well-being. I don't know about your time. You folks had round table, too?

TT: We had round tables but it was only the students on the table.

GK: Only students?

TT: Yeah, usually there'll be a senior at the head of the table and he would . . .

GK: Serve it out.

TT: Yeah.

GK: You folks had a waiter?

TT: We had waiters, but it wasn't that strict. The waiters had a hard time though.

(Laughter)

GK: They'd be running all the time just about.

WN: Were they students? The waiters?

GK: Yeah. You see, they would rotate. You had students, you'd be waiter. Some would be back in the dining room scullery doing the dishes. One of the things that I did and some

of the boys would go through, was mixing *poi*. You folks had *poi* mixer? We had this big, what looked like fifty-gallon wooden containers where the *poi* would come in, and about half full or better. And at that time, the boys mixed the *poi* for the girls' school, too. So if you were fortunate and the mixer worked, you could use the mixer, which they mix the dough for bread and whatever. But when the darnn thing broke down, that means you had to get in there with your hand and mix it.

(Laughter)

And there were two people assigned to do to the *poi* mixing. My roommate was Richard Kong. He was a small guy. And I would mix the *poi*. Well, we didn't mix *poi* every day. Like maybe twice a week. Sundays we had *poi*, and then another day during the week we had *poi*. So you'd have to get in there, stick your head down there, mix the water, and with your hand mix the *poi*. But that was kind of a tough job mixing the *poi*, especially if the machine broke down. If the machine didn't break down then fine, it's not too bad. You just put it in there, turn it on slow, and just watch it, add water, and keep mixing.

But that was the interesting part of it. Like I said, the dining room was the area for a lot of activities when everybody got together, more or less. Because when you go to classes, you're in your own class, but when you come to the dining room. . . . And being a military school, before you went to the dining room, you just didn't go running into the dining room. On that road we had, before the dormitories, we'd fall into formation. A company, B company, C company. Regular military formation. And then had head count, and after we went through the military rituals, and then we'd have to march to the dining room. We'd march in formation. You go, "Okay, A company goes first, B company, C company." And so you didn't have people charging in. When you got through, of course, you walked out. But when you went to the dining room, breakfast, lunch, and supper, we went down in formation.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

GK: So when we look at it, at that time now, Kamehameha Schools, I think the boys' school had less than two hundred. I think we had maybe one hundred fifty in the whole school. When we graduated, we only graduated like about twenty. Twenty-something. And when we turned out for football, whoever turned out made the team. Because Coach [Bill] Wise would say, "Well, okay maybe twenty-five, thirty." And those days, of course, we played both ways. Offense and defense. So if you're playing the game, I ended up playing the whole game. Every game. The only game I played three-quarters

of the game, the first game when I was a junior, when they said, "Okay, Kahanu, you go in." I went in and it was a punt formation. And the McKinley guy, I think it was a guy by the name of Willie, caught the ball and what I did, I knocked the ball out of (his hands), and I recovered the fumble. So after that, I made the first team.

(Laughter)

You can see, because we didn't have that many boys, right? So whoever went out there, more or less, made the team.

TT: What year did you go out?

GK: We won the '35 championship. I played '35 and '36. Incidentally I was selected for all-star that year. The newspaper that selected me first team was *Hawai'i Hochi*, a Japanese newspaper. *The [Honolulu] Advertiser* and *Honolulu [Star-Bulletin]* put me on the second team because they claimed I didn't play enough games. But I played three-quarters of that first game. After that, I made the first team. But I take a break right now. I'm not bragging now. I want to show you some pictures here.

WN: Okay, I'll turn this off.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

GK: Kamehameha, as far as I know, those days, we never scouted. Well, I guess maybe that time when they came to Kalākaua, but Kalākaua was only one school. You're not taking from all over the state or from all over the island.

WN: Now, the ten of you from Kalākaua, were you folks all good athletes?

GK: Yeah. We were fairly good athletes.

WN: I was just wondering if you folks were selected for your athletic ability or your academic ability?

GK: Well, I wasn't all that great, but academically, I was. . . . Ty, when you guys went there, did you guys have a silver pin?

TT: Nope.

GK: See, at our time, when I was in school, they had what they called Big Six committee. And they would select the top student from the senior class, junior, down even to the sophomore. So what this meant was that they have six boys, six students, like a disciplinary committee that would represent the students in any kind of a altercation or whatever. So you would have the faculty, and then the Big Six supposedly

represented the students. So I was selected Big Six. And also, when I went from Kalākaua, from the very first semester, I qualified for what they call the big silver pin. They give you a pin, silver, that you wear as kind of an emblem for being an outstanding student for the class. So you wore that, kind of feel proud. I got the silver pin. In fact, I graduated with my silver pin. I had it all through. I also ended up being my class valedictorian.

But Kamehameha at that time, we had both academic and vocational [tracks]. And at that time, it was an appropriate thing because there were a lot of vocational trades. You had more vocational opportunities than you had academic. Because when I got to the point of graduation, this guy, Teddy Awana, was working. He was going to UH [University of Hawai'i] and he also was a part-time police officer. And what he did, he checked the different parks. In different parks he would stop by and check to see if everything was okay. So when I was coming up for senior, he came up to me and said, "George, you want to take my job? I'm going to go to school full time. Take my job, easy. You get paid and go to school part-time." But at that time, I don't know if I mentioned, but I was given an opportunity to go to—did I mention about . . .

WN: Yeah, about that.

GK: I talked about that. So I decided, well, no, I should go to work. And part of this Panalā'au deal, I had gone on two trips. And some of the boys who graduated went back. But at that time, I decided I would get on with my life and not go [back] down there. While it was a good deal, it was very temporary, being on the islands. Three months or you could be a year, but no future. So I had to hustle around, and when I graduated, went to. . . .

WN: So you were pretty much on the academic track and not vocational track? Or was it really definite differences between the academic and the vocational?

GK: At that time, I don't think there was that kind of distinction between. We had boys who left, like Arthur Harris. He left school, he and another classmate of ours, Louis Soares, left school at the end of junior year. High junior. At that time we had a high junior and low junior. And they went to university, started anyway, and then ran out of money or whatever and they were selected to go down to the Line Islands. But I went when I was a junior. I was selected to go on the first trip. And then when I was going to be a senior, I made the second trip. But when I graduated, I didn't go back. I thought I had enough, and I had to get on with my life. But I say that because of the training I received at Kamehameha, I ultimately ended up at the shipyard. And when the war started, it created a lot of opportunities. Different positions, supervisory positions.

- WN: Before we get into the war, I just want to ask you a little bit more questions about Kamehameha. Who were some of your favorite teachers at Kamehameha?
- GK: Well, I had Robert Lowrie. We called him "Bulldog." He taught us mechanical drawing and physics.
- WN: Is it L-O-W-R-E-Y?
- GK: No. L-O-W-R-I-E. We had Mr. Clarence Budd. B-U-D-D. He was our electrical instructor, and he was our class adviser. Real nice guy. We had a [Charles] Parrent. Mr. [C.T.] Parrent. P-A-R-R-E-N-T. I can't think of his first name. But Parrent was the part-time coordinator. And then we had a Mr. [C.G.] Banning. I should have gotten my yearbook.
- WN: Just your favorite ones.
- GK: Yeah. But, you know . . .
- TT: How about Mitchell? Donald Mitchell was he . . .
- GK: Yeah, he was, Don Mitchell was a very good instructor, good friend, too. He was more like a friend to us.
- WN: What did he teach?
- GK: He was into Hawaiiana, social studies. Was it social studies? Yeah.
- WN: Did you have a lot of Hawaiiana at Kamehameha?
- GK: We had class, but not to the degree that they have today.
- TT: What kind of class did you have? Was it a history class or a language class? Did they have language class?
- GK: We never had language. We had history. Social studies, history, math, religion, and then English.
- WN: What the history Hawaiian history or . . . ?
- GK: No, it was regular. National, worldwide history. And music. Music was a big part of the school, too.
- WN: And this is all kinds of music? Classical and so forth?
- GK: Yeah. And military ROTC [Reserve Officers' Training Corps], and mechanical drawing. Mechanical drawing was an important part. When you entered school and when you

got into, I think it was the tenth grade, by the time you graduated, you had to have, I'm thinking about maybe (sixty-three) drawings. (Drawings became more difficult as you advanced.) Which was great because it challenged you in a lot of respects. I mean, as far as drawing and research and stuff. So Robert Lowrie, I credit him with giving us such a good training in mechanical drawing so that we were able to go out and work, and be able to compete at the level of the good skilled mechanics.

In fact, we had students that went on Matson ships. This guy, Buster Casires ended up being chief engineer on Matson ships, and he went part-time. He went two weeks away and he came back. Sometimes he was away longer than a couple of weeks. But the level of vocational training that we received—I worked in the plantation at Waipahu. Also worked in town at Island Welding. And then when I graduated, of course, I went down and worked for Inter-Island [Steam Navigation Company]. But anyway . . .

TT: Can you talk a little bit about the *Hui 'Oiwi* that you were a part of, you said?

GK: Well, we had *Hui 'Oiwi*, but the focus in Kamehameha in those days wasn't into Hawaiiana.

TT: So this was like a extracurricular activity.

GK: Extracurricular. So we had meetings every Sunday. Sunday morning, between breakfast and church, there was a time that you could spend into whatever. And so we had *Hui 'Oiwi* meet Sunday morning. After we got through breakfast, we went to this room. Dr. Mitchell was our adviser. He was one who coached us or instructed us into what Hawaiiana (was about), except for what we learned at home. We, a lot of times, brought up situations at home what was culture or different stories. And then we talked about different things. So Mr. Mitchell, at that time, he wasn't a doctor. He was just Mr. Mitchell, a teacher. Actually, Mitchell came from Kalākaua, so I knew him at Kalākaua. He originally came to Kalākaua and then he graduated up to Kamehameha. You know, applied for Kamehameha. We had another teacher who did the same thing, was Mr. Burmeister. And he was into mechanical drawing. He went from Kalākaua into Kamehameha School.

WN: Burmeister. It's the Burmeister Overpass?

GK: Exactly. That's his place. When they built the road, he gave the state such a bad time he made them give him an overpass. Otherwise they didn't have access through his property.

WN: Interesting.

GK: Exactly, Burmeister.

TT: So the *Hui 'Oiwi*, what kinds of things would you guys do besides sitting and talking about . . . ?

GK: Well, we prepared food. Also, Mr. Mitchell was also good friends with the Taylors. Mr. Ray Taylor. At that time, they have some kind of royal blood in them. So they would come. They would come to the class also talk to us about different Hawaiian things. So one time we talked about Hawaiian food. Different kinds of Hawaiian food that Hawaiians ate. And, you know, it's a fact that Hawaiians ate dog. But the way the Hawaiians raised the animal was that it was something to be eaten so they fed it certain select foods. So we were going to have this *lū'au* one Sunday. And Papa Taylor was going to prepare the *kālua* pig for us. So when he had the *lū'au* and everything, and after, he said, "Well, how did you guys like the *kālua* pig?"

"Oh that was *'ono*, tender meat."

And he said, "Well you folks were all indoctrinated in eating dog."

(Laughter)

Whether that was a fact or not, I don't know. You don't know, but it tasted real good. In fact, I thought it was because the meat, pig, you can tell there is a certain texture with the meat. But this meat was real, real tender. And so what they did, they showed us the tail of the dog.

(Laughter)

But hey, we're still alive, right? It was a big deal. After that we all laughed about it because, okay, so our ancestors ate dogs, so we eat dog, too. So what's the difference?

We never had any *hula* or anything like that. It was strictly language. Trying to speak the language, and learning the different songs, meanings of songs.

TT: Did you play any of the Hawaiian sports?

GK: Yeah. We did that, too. *'Ulu maika*, and the spear. We did that, too. Yeah. It was part of. . . . That was about the extent of it. Not too much really, I don't think, not to the degree that the kids get it today. It's amazing what they do today as far as. . . .

But one of the big deals was the song contest. Song contest in those days was strictly a school activity. We never had anybody, our parents, coming up to listen to it or any outsiders. And we had like the Bishop Museum. In the front, the entrance, that was a stage. Next door was a tennis court. One year that was a stage for the song contest. One year we had it down the gym. You didn't see the old gym? No, it was gone when you. . . . Anyway, between School and (Vineyard [streets], next to) Houghtailing [Street]

was this gym, wooden building. And next to it was a shop building and the military ROTC building. And that was a square concrete building for the shops. And then next to it was the gymnasium. At the gym we practiced basketball, and then had meetings down there, certain meetings down at the campus. Meetings, we had at the school, that time, even boxing as part of the athletic activity.

WN: But the song contest was pretty much just school?

GK: Yeah, strictly a school thing. And like I said, we never had the crowds that they have today. And everything was really cool. You didn't have all that rousing about who won. If you won, so what, everybody give you a big hand. Hey! But no big deal. It's, more or less, expected that the contest would be between the juniors and the seniors. For our class, we had tried couple years, and finally we thought, well, we needed to change. Maybe get a new song leader. So we got somebody recommended, this Mr. Kamakau, whose father—Sam was in school, a classmate. He was in the class ahead of us. No, in fact, two classes ahead of us. Somebody recommended Sam Kamakau. So when Sam Kamakau came up and he says, "Okay, how many of you?" And being high eleven senior, half the class be out. So what you had was maybe ten boys to practice. So he said, "You folks are too small. You're never going to win. We must select a song that would be something different, catchy. Something that would be easy to sing four parts." So he was right, because the day of the song contest, I think, when we ended up, I think there was about fifteen of us on the stage. And our leader was Charlie Mahoe. So we were down at the gymnasium, and we sang this song. I remember that song ["Pehea Hoi Au"] because, (GK sings:) "*Pehea hoi au i tau ite mai la.*" You know that song?

TT: Mm.

GK: Well, that's the song we sang because (GK sings:) "*i tau ite mai la 'eā 'eā 'eā.*" And Charlie says, "Come on, *geev* it. Sing out. Make fun out of it." And so we did. We just sang all out. And we won. (Chuckles) We won the song contest. That was the first time we did win the song contest. It was that type of thing. More fun than anything else. We couldn't be too serious about it.

WN: Was it just the boys? Or boys and girls combined?

GK: Well, the girls would have their part of it, and the boys would have their part. But nothing combined. It was boys' school, they sing their own. Girls' school, their own competition. So that's the way it was. Today, it's a big deal today. I guess your time, too, Ty, it was big.

TT: Yeah.



GK: You just wonder. In fact, this year, I thought, [tape inaudible], you know. There it is. There are people on the stage, TV, and here was this guy chewing gum. I'm thinking, how the heck can he sing and chew gum at the same time? You know, I mean ridiculous.

(Laughter)

And so that really turned me off. Talk about this a little more.

WN: I think it was you, huh, Ty?

TT: No, no, no.

(Laughter)

GK: So Kamehameha Schools, in those days, it was a real family. Even the instructors, they lived right on the campus. They lived in the dormitory. Bob Lowrie, Instructor Lowrie, was upstairs on the second level in Dorm D. And that was my dormitory, Dorm D. And I lived, as you came in up the stairwell, and you turned to the right, my room was the first room. But between my room there was this walkway back to Mr. Lowrie's apartment. So one of the things he was strict about was, we had study hour from 6:30 till 9:00 [P.M.]. And you couldn't leave the room once study hour started. The bell would ring and you'd get to your room and start studying. That was okay. After that, after study hour was over, you could go down and use the bathroom, brush your teeth, and all of that. But once you came back, after taps, and went to bed, you couldn't go down and use the bathroom again. So young people, okay. But for some people, it's not that easy to keep from. . . . So this guy, Mr. Lowrie, he would be in his room, I guess, reading or whatever. And when you went down the stairway, the steps are all wood, right? And you hear "Creak, creak, creak." And I'm in the room. I would leave my door open, so I can see who's going down. And I'll be darned, Mr. Lowrie, he would say, "Arthur Harris, get back in your room."

(Laughter)

Well, it wasn't Harris, but I used his name. Well, Arthur Harris was one time. And I'm in my room, I crack up laughing, because I'm thinking, how the hell can he tell? I used to sneak down, too. But if you're smart, when you walk, you walk close to the edge where the railing was because then it'd be fixed there right? In between, there's movement in the wood so it'd creak. But if you hung on to the railing and went down, and held your weight up so that you don't have too much of your weight on the steps, you can go down without making any noise. And actually, Mr. Lowrie was kind of hard-of-hearing. So I would do that. I would go down, I'd hang on the railing, go sneak down to the bathroom and come back up. But he would call these guys out, and I don't know how he did it. But really, he was a remarkable guy.

TT: How many of you were in one dorm?

GK: There's about twenty of us. About twenty, I think.

TT: And all mixed grades?

GK: Yeah, mixed grades. We had, in the corner, in the ends, were seniors. In the dormitory, we had Dorm A, it was cottage. Cottage A, Dorm A. The Bishop Hall, beneath the banyan tree right? Right there was a cottage dormitory. And that was for the kids like seventh and eighth, I think. And then up at the upper area, they had this *lānai*, a low building, a single building. That was for the younger students, too. But then A, B, D, E were for the upperclassmen. And those days, it was all down on the lower campus. So that whole area, from Kalihi Street to Houghtailing, King Street to School Street was all Kamehameha School, except for an area along Houghtailing that had some houses in there. But otherwise, that whole campus where Farrington [High School] is [today], was all Kamehameha School.

Oh, I forgot to mention, they also had what they called prep school. Kids that went in school, I think, from maybe first grade. First grade to about the fourth or fifth grade. And that was prep school. I mean, these were young kids, really.

One of the other things, too, that was interesting. When you came to the tenth grade, you had to decide what trade you would like to be in. So we had like couple of weeks of the basics. Whoever figured this thing out thought that, okay, you would have to have carpentry because eventually you would need some carpentry. You'd have to know something about electricity 'cause, you know, electricity. And then you had to have—electricity, carpentry—and auto mechanics. Little bit of auto mechanics. Then you select another subject that you think you would like to go in. And then you'd have these four. So throughout the year, different quarters, like you have so many weeks of this, and then the following, so many weeks, you change, you go to the next class. And so when you finally got through, you said, "Okay, I want to be an electrician," or "I want to be a welder." Whatever you wanted to be. Whatever you were interested in. So in that regard, you got to have at least an idea of what you wanted to be. It's not like you being shoved into something that maybe you might not be interested in. And it usually turned out that the trade that you were interested in, it's what that you made your career, more or less. Not only that, our days Kamehameha was a military school. So you're talking about uniform. You wore strictly military khakis.

WN: Every day?

GK: Every day. Every day you wore your military khakis. And then Sunday, we had the blues. Like the West Point blues. The neck all the way up to here, button up right down the middle. And stripes on the side. Just like being in West Point. But that was Sunday,

because Sunday, you went to church. Sunday morning was a church day. You fall into formation and you march all the way down to the church. And the girls would come from the upper campus, and they also would attend church services.

TT: Where was the church?

GK: Right there at the corner. You know where Houghtailing and King [streets], Farrington School, where the auditorium is, Farrington. Is that corner where the auditorium is? They have that auditorium at Farrington.

WN: Houghtailing and King?

GK: Yeah. Across from the pumping station? That's that side.

WN: Oh, on that side?

GK: Yeah, way down that corner. You know where King Street and across the street is a pumping station?

TT: Yeah.

WN: Got a Shell station across?

GK: Yeah. Shell station across there. Right in that area was the church. And that was a beautiful church. Really beautiful. It's too bad when they demolished the building they didn't try to move it because it was a small church but really, really nice. So going to church Sunday was a ritual. Saturday, we had a day off. Saturday, usually after lunch, and then you had the afternoon off. Or you could if you want to, you could submit a pass and go out early in the morning.

WN: So what did you folks do on Saturday? Like what?

GK: Well, if you had twenty-five cents or fifty-cents you would catch the streetcar. Used to cost a dime, I think. Nickel or dime. You catch the streetcar at the corner, and you go to town, have a bowl of *saimin* for fifteen cents, and then you go to the theater—Princess or Hawai'i Theatre—for another dime or twenty cents. So for fifty cents, you'd have a big day. Then you come back, or you walk around town, go shopping, whatever.

WN: How did you folks get the money to do that?

GK: Well, you'd have to have money. I told you I worked in the cannery. So you'd have a bank. You could put money in a bank. You have your own account. So when you wanted money, you have to go out to the office and draw out money. This is your banking account. Banking system. So you draw out maybe a dollar. If you became a

senior, and you want to treat your girlfriend to the theater and buy her a *lei*, you stop, buy a *lei* for a quarter, and treat her to a movie for a quarter. Like you said, where do you get the money from? You get money from home. But you wouldn't have all that much. You couldn't keep money in the room. So you'd have to have it in this bank. And the principal's secretary took care of it. When you went to her office and she says, okay, you have to make out a chit. How much money do you want to withdraw, what your balance is. How much you drawing out, and what your balance would be. So you had an idea of how much money you had available. But you didn't have to spend all that much. It's great.

WN: You must have looked forward to Saturdays.

GK: Yeah. Right. We did look forward to Saturdays.

TT: How often did you see your family during the school year?

GK: Well, I tell you, Ty, fortunately, where I lived—I lived in Kalihi, Gulick Avenue. So it was like maybe four blocks. One, two, three—about five blocks from school. So I could walk on the back road to Kalihi Street, down, and then turn by the Mormon church. I think the road was Beckley Road. Turn there, then go to Gulick Avenue, and then go straight down, and then I was home, couple of blocks home. So seeing my family—and my mother used to do my laundry. About every other week, she used to come up and bring my laundry. So I would see her at least every other week. So other than that, boys from neighbor islands hardly saw their parents. Now, I'm trying to recall when we went home for vacation. I think Christmas vacation was one time. I think, other than that, I don't think we had any other vacation. I'm trying to think whether we went home on Thanksgiving or not.

TT: Easter maybe? Did you have a spring break during the Easter period?

GK: No, we didn't go home on Thanksgiving because we had football usually. I played football on Thanksgiving so we were at school Thanksgiving holiday.

WN: Summer, you went home.

GK: Yeah, summer, we went home.

WN: I know you talked a little bit about dances and things. Did you have a lot of those social events?

GK: Okay, so now, I think it was about the second half of the year, they had what they call "calling." So they provide bus, Saturday evening after supper, and we would go up to the girls school and have socials, dancing. Not only dancing, but they had pool tables.

You could play pool, play Ping-Pong, and dancing. It was really cute in those days. They recorded music and on one side (of the gymnasium) would be the girls sitting down, the boys on the other side, and hardly anybody dancing until they announced, "Oh, last dance. Everybody start."

(Laughter)

Then everybody charged in on the floor. But other than that, everybody was sitting down and looking at one another. How bashful. When I first went to calling, my first sergeant says, "Okay you guys, tonight we're gonna have calling. I want to see all you guys," because it was optional. You didn't have to go. If you didn't want to, you could stay down on the campus. "So I want to see all you guys up there." So we had to go, right? We had to figure, Joey is the first sergeant, he's gonna give us the business if we [don't] go. So all eight of us, we say, "Okay, let's go up there." So we went up to calling.

(Telephone rings. Taping interrupted, then resumes.)

Okay. So anyway, when we first went up there, of course, the girls now, they looking at all these boys. New boys. "I like that guy. I don't like this guy." And we're all so bashful. In fact this girl came up to me and introduced herself and everything. And boy, I thought, "Wow." I was frustrated. I didn't know what to do. So I was embarrassed by her talking to me. I wanted to go play Ping-Pong. But it was a way of socializing. Boys' school meeting girls' school. But it was a nice thing because, eventually, you get to know these girls. Like I got to be good friends with Dr. [Isabella] Abbott. In fact, I called her the other day about a dinner. The coordinator for our class. But anyway, and we met a few other girls, too. The girls, too, of course, they're not interested in us, too, or some maybe, but. . . . Basically, you say, "Hello, hi." This kind of stuff.

So different functions like song contest, you meet them. Sundays, about every other Sunday we had a parade on the playgrounds. We'd be all out in our blues, Sunday parade. They bring the girls down. And the girls would line the field when we go through our parade. Oh, incidentally, there was a parade, once a year the final parade the girls' school would join in. But otherwise, we'd have sponsors. And for every company, we had a girl sponsor. So that's how the girls participated ordinarily. But for the final parade at the end of the year, they'd have the whole girls' school and the boys' school marching. Usually at that time, the parents would come to the campus and watch the parade. But other than that, some parents would come. Like you were asking how often do you see them. Well, they would come at that time at the drill parades and then watch the parade. It was interesting because you go through different drill formations and that type of thing. Competition, company competition, squad competition, the whole battalion parade.

TT: What did the sponsors do? You said the girls were sponsors. What does that mean?

GK: Well, you have company commanders, right, lead their company. And then they would be right next to you marching with you, along with you.

TT: Okay.

GK: They wouldn't be in the front, but they would be maybe one step behind and march along with you. So that's what they did. When you were, you folks have the military, too?

TT: We had ROTC. It was only for two years. We didn't have any sponsors. Plus some of the girls were in ROTC, too. It was a different thing.

GK: Uh-huh, yeah. But altogether, all in all, I really enjoyed Kamehameha. I say that between Kamehameha—I enjoyed the military when I was in the military—I liked Kamehameha. I liked Kamehameha for what it did for me. I don't think I would have gotten where I was or where I have been if it wasn't for Kamehameha. A lot of places where you work there is a certain discipline. Being through Kamehameha, you get to accept those who are ahead of you, the senior officers. Those below you, you respect. Those above you, you respect, too. You appreciate what it's all about. Today, I think that's where the young people don't get enough of it. We were fortunate in that we had these instructors there who had been there for so long they knew exactly what the young person's mind was thinking. It got to the point where they figured us out. We couldn't come up with any more new tricks that they hadn't already experienced.

Incidentally, every morning, we had to set up our bed in the room. We had to dust down and everything. Now, when Mr. Lowrie came in the room, along the wall there was this ledge. So when he came into the room, the first thing he did, over the door on that ledge, he'd reach above for dust and then he'd go down the ledge checking for dust, and then he'd go around. Then on the bed he bounced the bed to see if the sheet was pulled tight enough. But it got to the point that if I was in a hurry, the main thing I would do is clean, run a cloth above the door and down the edge. And that was it.

(Laughter)

That's all he would check, anyway. So I thought, "Well, I'm one step ahead of him."

(Laughter)

GK: But that was part of the things. You trying to keep one step ahead of these people.

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 38-11-3-02; SIDE ONE

GK: . . . when I graduated from Kamehameha, I was working at O'ahu Sugar Company. I left it and I went to Inter-Island Steam Navigation [Company]. That was a good job. I mean, really, we had a lot of overtime, a lot of work. However, we had these guys come from the Mainland, and they were kind of on the greedy side because they were thinking that, "Gee, we were making a lot of overtime, we should get more money." But actually, in between the weekends—see, the inter-island ships used to come in mostly on the weekend because the crews had to go home and stuff. So they'd come in on a Friday afternoon and they'd stay in port and leave maybe Monday night, Monday afternoon. So, which meant that during the week, we hardly did any work unless we got commercial jobs or stuff like that. But during the weekend, when the ships were in, that's when we worked and that's when we were like on overtime. We were making time and a half then. And at that time, I was making like eighty-five cents an hour. I was a new recruit, just a new guy. The other guys were making about a dollar, a little over a dollar. The point was, I was happy. Things were not that expensive. You could rent a house, a two-bedroom house, for twenty-five dollars, twenty dollars a month.

WN: Where did you rent?

GK: At Kaimukī.

WN: Oh, that's right.

GK: As a result, we went on strike. And [Stanley] Kennedy, who was the president of the company, finally when we were negotiating, he figured, "I'm not making money, I'm losing money"—and he could see the trend about air transportation coming in. So he said, "I'm going to shut down the company." So he did. No more steam transportation, shipping between islands. That was too bad in a way because—well, it didn't shut down all, I think they had only couple—the *Humu'ula* and *Hawai'i*, they carried cattle between islands, and vegetables and stuff. So, they continued running, but the other ships were tied up. But basically, they didn't need all the workers. So, Kennedy went and opened up Hawaiian Airlines. I don't know whether it was called Inter-Island Airlines or Hawaiian Airlines at that time. But anyway, he established this new air transportation between islands, neighbor islands.

So as a result of that strike, I was without work. And then, I had a call one day to go and meet this person up at Kamehameha Schools, and I went up there and he—guy by the name of John McCombs—he asked me if I wanted to work for the summer at

Kamehameha School as a maintenance supervisor because they had painting to do, touch-up painting in the dormitories, gymnasiums, and things. We had about ten people working, and he wanted somebody to be a kind of supervisor. I got the job. When the summer was almost over and school was going to begin, he said, "Well, I'm finished now. I'm going to have to let you go." He asked me, "What can you do?"

I told him, "I used to do this, do this."

So he says, "Here, I'll give you a note to go to E.E., Black Limited, Contractor"—and E.E. Black was one of the three big contractors in Honolulu—"and see George Collins." This guy, George Collins, was like the engineer estimator for E.E. Black and he was a trustee for Kamehameha Schools.

So, I went down, I gave him the note, after he looked at me, he says, "Well, okay, let's see what we can do for you." So he gave the note to E.E. Black, the head of the company. So Black says, "Okay, we could use somebody. I'll hire you, fifty cents an hour." So, okay, he took me in the back of the shop. At that time, Black's office, shop, was down at Kawaiaha'o Street, behind McKinley High School. Behind that area, he had this great big building. He says, "You go there," and he took me to meet the supervisor in the shop. It was a person by the name of John Jose. So anyway, I got a job, put me to work, and everything. Make the story short, we ended up doing Kamehameha Schools Boys School. That whole complex had structural steel framing, and so he hired another welder and he and I put up all the steelwork in the Kamehameha School, the boys' school. But, after that, I ended up in a situation where we had this guy by the name of Kendall. He was kind of a . . .

WN: I think we covered that last time.

GK: I think we covered. Okay, I want to get over that. So anyway, I got down into Pearl Harbor. Right? And we covered all of that.

WN: Right.

GK: When the war was over, we got laid off. Right? And so, I said, "Well, okay." I went out and worked for another construction company, Honolulu Builders.

WN: Oh, is that right?

GK: I don't know if I had that part.

WN: I thought you worked Pearl Harbor all the way from 1940 on. I didn't know you got laid off.

GK: Yeah, I got laid off. Not only me, but a lot of the people who were non-veterans.



TT: And those were the people that said that you'd be hired there forever.

GK: Yeah, because we were there before the war, a lot of us. And then, they hired these kids that came out of school, high school, came to shipyard to be helpers and stuff. When the war was almost over, we laid off a lot of those guys because we didn't need them. They were least seniority, so we laid them off. However, they went into the service. Some of them never left the island, went up to Schofield. When they got laid off or let out by the military after one year service, whatever, they came back to the shipyard and now they're veterans. So us guys, who had ten, twelve, fourteen, years of service, got released.

So, then not too long after, I went out and worked for Honolulu Builders for several months or whatever, less than a year. And then, the Korean War broke out. And now the shipyard is looking for employees again. So, a personnel man came up to my house and when I got home my wife said, "(someone) came looking for you."

I said, "What for?"

She said, "When you get a chance, give him a ring."

So I called him up. He says, "George, how about coming back to the shipyard?"

So I says, "For how long?"

"Well, maybe six months."

I say, "Forget it, I got a job" for whatever.

A couple weeks later, I get another job (offer). He says, "Now, George, you can come back. We're going to have at least a year (of work) and we're going to promote you to supervisor," because I was a supervisor during the war.

I talked to my wife. We had (just) finished (a job) at Saint Louis, (adjoining the) university. Up Saint Louis Heights, way up the top, we had the contract. Alencastre Street, this company, Honolulu Builders, extended that subdivision up further all the way to the end, and I was working on that project. So now we (are about) finished, we're going to move to the Big Island, putting a road around the island, [Hawai'i] Belt Road around the Big Island. So they told me, "You go up there, we pay your way home once a month." So my family's here and I'm up there except for once a month. I would come back the weekend.

So I talked to my wife, she said, "You might as well take a chance, go back to Pearl Harbor." So I went back to Pearl Harbor, I ended up in the planning department after about—must have been about six months, a year. Then I thought, I get enough in the

shops, get up to the ad building, work with the administrative part of it. So, I went up there and worked in planning, then I saw the war was going to be over. So here we go again, get laid off again, right? I mean, make sense, we increase, now we going to have to go down to the normal peacetime level.

WN: This is the Korean War you're talking about?

GK: Yeah. Guarantee lay off, right? Because we build up all that much. So, I was trying to figure out—then I met this guy Brooks who was with us, he was in the sheet metal section. He came one day through the office in uniform.

I said, "Hey, how did you do it?"

He says, "Well, I went to the Mainland." He joined construction battalion, Seabees. He gave me all the scoop, how to get it and everything. So when I told my boss I was going on vacation. I told him, "I'm going to visit the Big Island." So, I went to the Mainland to join up, I took all my commendations. You know, outstanding performance, and all that kind of stuff, put it all in a folder. I took some *leis*, couple of *leis*. I figured, I'm going to have to pass the secretary in the commander's office, so I got to have good rapport with her.

(Laughter)

Hey, you got to figure these things out, right. I mean, I went to Kamehameha Schools, right?

(Laughter)

So, I took couple of *leis*.

TT: Where was this on the Mainland? What state?

GK: San Francisco. On Market Street, federal building, right there on Market Street. You come off the subway, and you walk up, and it's right there.

WN: This is fifty-something. Fifty-three?

GK: Somewhere around. . . . Anyway, it's right on Market Street. It's right beyond that. So, I went up there, and I went into—this guy told me look for the directory and tell you what floor and what office. So I went. This secretary says, "Yes? What can we do for you?"

I says, "Well, I want to join the construction battalion."

She says, "Oh."

I say, "I'm from Hawai'i." And before anything happens, I reach in and I pull a *lei* out. I gave the *wahine* the *lei*. Man, her eyes popped open. I say, "This is our custom in Hawai'i. So now you got to give me a smooch for the *lei*." And this other *Haole wahine* came running in. I said, "Oh yeah, here's a *lei* for you, too." So I gave her one. Right away, they were anxious to help me and said, "What do you want to do?"

I said, "We can't join up down in Hawai'i, Pearl Harbor, but I'm told we can join up here."

She says, "Yeah, okay, I'll go and talk to the commander." So she went and talked to the commander. She says, "Okay, he'll be happy to see you."

So I went in, showed him all my credentials and stuff. So he tells me, "Before we can go any further you have to take a physical."

I figured, okay. I said, "When do I have to take the physical?"

He says, "Tomorrow. We set it up tomorrow. You go to—" I think, Terminal Island in the Bay, right? Used to be military during the war. So I went down there, took my physical, passed. Came back, I told him. Then he went through, he said, "You know, you a college grad?"

I said, "No, I'm not a college grad."

He said, "The best thing I can do for you is give you a CPO."

I said, "Wow." That's more than I could expect, right?

WN: What is CPO?

GK: Chief Petty Officer. So, now, let's see. . . . So what happened, while I was waiting. . . . What I had to do is attend a couple of meetings up there at Terminal Island. This guy here, where I stayed in San Francisco, Frank.

WN: Frank Arnold?

GK: He was in the construction battalion during World War II. He came to Hawai'i, and he was an officer, and he married this good friend of ours. And this was his place on Romaine Street. So I stayed with him while I was waiting to attend meetings up there. After I attended the meeting, then I went back to Hawai'i and I reported to the recruiting station in Pearl Harbor. And I told 'em, "Look, when my records come back to Pearl Harbor, transfer it back. Call me and I want to get in the service." So a couple of

months later, this guy called me up. He says, "Hey George, your record's in." So I went over, and I told him I wanted to join the service. So this is our class. We had to go, after you joined up, they took civilians and sent them to Port Hueneme for training. And all kinds of guys from all over the Mainland come in. A lot of those guys are college graduates. But all they could get was second-class, first-class, and, hey, they gave us CPO based on our experience. See, what they're looking for is experience, that's what it was.

WN: You're an officer, huh, in there?

GK: Yeah. So it's Chief Petty Officer. So, I left the shipyard and I went in the service. I was in the service for two years.

WN: Fifty-three to '55.

GK: Yeah. So, you see the sacrifice that we had to make. Not only me, so much, was my family. I had to leave my wife, and three children, and go, you know. Fortunately, she could see it because I told her, you know, when I was released the first time I went out and when I first started to work for this job on construction in a subdivision, it meant that I had to go down and work with a buster, pick and shovel, wheelbarrow and all that kind stuff. I used to come home dirty. Then I got promoted to the truck driver. I would drive from where I live, Kalihi, and pick up everybody along the way all the way back up to Saint Louis Heights. By the time I got home in the afternoon, I was filthy dirty. My wife used to look at me, she says, "Wow. Yuck."

I said, "It's a job." That's my responsibility. I have to do my share about keeping the family going. So, ultimately, I told her, "You used to see me, how I came home and how I used to come home all dirty and everything?" I say, "This same thing is going to happen again. I'm going to be laid off again, I know I'm going to be laid off, and the only thing I can do is I can go in and become a veteran. If I'm a veteran, I'm in there for life." With my previous service and all that, I have more seniority than 95 percent of the guys there because I was there before the war started. You know?

And so she says, "Okay." She sacrificed. She was home taking care of the family and I was in the service. We went to school at Port Hueneme for six months. Then after that, because prior to this period they picked up construction workers and sent them overseas right off the bat, and they had a lot of problems. Guys didn't know military discipline, didn't know how to march, didn't know how to fire a rifle, or anything like that. So they figured it out that they had to give us civilians some semblance of military training. And so, fortunately, with my Kamehameha Schools experience, I was like head of the class because of that. Again, I say, Kamehameha really helped me out because I went in not like a recruit but like a seasoned military person.

WN: They took that into consideration, your Kamehameha ROTC?

GK: Right. After six months I was sent to the Philippines. At the Philippines they were building this base at Subic Bay. The navy had a base repair facility at Subic, but what they were doing was building an aircraft facility for carriers to come in, offload planes. They had the whole bit. Barracks, hospital, dining hall, the whole bit, I tell you. We cut down a mountain and moved the earth to fill up the bay, the water. We used nearly five million cubic yards of dirt to fill into this area, to fill up, and then build this new airfield, new landing pier, and the whole bit. When the Philippines told the U.S. they had to move out, I tell you, I really felt badly about it because we, the government, the U.S., put a lot of money into building that facility. And just like that, you're gone. And to me, that wasn't right. And the fact that we're back there today doing what we're doing, I'm not happy about it because I'm thinking, you know, for all that we did for them, they should at least give us more consideration than that.

But anyway, after my time was over in the service, I came back and I went back to the shipyard.

WN: For good.

GK: For good. Now, I'm available. You know, shipyard is such a big entity. I mean, it's got everything from down to basics all the way to the top. And so, I was able to make different moves, get different promotions. When I retired after, what, thirty-four years, including my military service, I was head of what they called the methods and standards branch. Also, I went overseas as advisor to different countries. I was advisor to the Royal Thai Navy. I spent six months over there. I was out in Vietnam for three months as an advisor again.

WN: During the war?

GK: During the Vietnam War, yes. During the Vietnam War, I was also over there, basically, working with the navy. They were trying to build small ships, riverboats, and trying to increase efficiency in the Vietnamese construction repair activity. But, the attitude of the people means a lot, a difference. People over there liked what they were doing in the shipyard and they weren't too crazy about getting things done in a hurry. Because, some of these guys who weren't fighting, they had a good job in the shipyard keeping out of the war because of political connections, whatever. So you couldn't get them to do more than they had to. They did minimum what they had to do to get by. That was my feeling about it.

WN: So you retired in '74?

GK: Yep.

WN: So what have you been doing since '74?

GK: I tell you. I retired, but in my life when I went through that first layoff with E.E. Black or when I quit, and after I was laid off from the shipyard, I tried to get back to Black. And Black told me, "Okay, we got a job that we're going to need somebody, but it'd be two weeks." So two weeks after I went back, because I had turned down a project—they wanted me to go back earlier when I finished, and before I went to the shipyard, and I told them, no, I didn't want to go back because I was going to go to the shipyard. So, this time here, a guy by the name of Winne was the superintendent. He recognized me as having turned down the opportunity to get back to Black back in '40. So, I figured, well, okay, I need to find something on the side in case anything like this happen again. So I ended up working with the Pacific Marine Shipyard.

WN: Yeah, that's right. I think you told us that. Winne, yeah?

GK: I told you folks that? I told you about that.

WN: By the way, you moved to Maui in 1980.

GK: So, 1980, that time between retirement and stuff, I was working at Pacific Marine. And then, my wife got quite ill and she had cancer, so eventually she passed away in March 13, I think, 1979. So, while working with Pacific Marine—see, when I was working at the shipyard I used to go and work at Pacific Marine when they needed people. They would call me, "George, we got a ship coming in and we need your help down here." So I would go down there and work. If they needed additional people, I would make contacts in the shipyard and ask them to come down and work, make extra money. The conditions were good. So when I retired, I was picked up full time by Pacific Marine, and I went in as a supervisor. So from that period of '74 to '80, I worked full time. In fact, even after that, I was hired as an inspector to inspect government, navy jobs, and working for Pacific Marine. They treated me real good, real nice. In fact, when my wife got so bad that I had to stay home and take care of her, I told Steven Loui, the head of the company at that time, "You know, Steven, I got to quit. I've got to stay home. I have my daughter taking care of her mother, but it's too much for her. I think I should quit and stay home and take care of her." And for months, they would continue to send me my check in the mail. They were that good about it. It's like they put me on furlough.

They told me, "George, one of these days—you can't stay home forever, do nothing—so one of these days you want to come back to work, feel free to come back to work."

So, I stayed home until my wife finally passed away and after several months, I thought, I might as well get back and do something. So I went back to the company and I worked until I figured I was old enough to retire again. I made Social Security beneficial age. What, sixty-five?

WN: You retired from Pearl Harbor when you were fifty-seven?

GK: Fifty-five years. See, that time, if you had thirty years of service, you could retire at thirty [years] and fifty-five [years of age]. When it came time, I had by then, thirty-four. Now I had to wait until I made fifty-five, so I retired at [fifty-five] with [thirty-four] years. And then from there I went to Pacific Marine, worked full time until in 1980, I think, I retired again. So, I retired a second time. But even at that time, I was sitting here one day, we were having lunch and the phone rings. This guy, Brian Louie, who's personnel man for Hawaiian Shipyard, is on the phone, "Hey, George, you ready to come back to work?" He said, "You tired of goofing off?"

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Well, we got a job for you." They were looking for a structural inspector, a qualified structural inspector. They consulted a lot of people, but the shipyard wouldn't accept them for one reason or other. So they finally hit on me. Maybe they could call me. So they called me.

And I used to go down and work. I go down Monday morning, they pick me up at the airport, I go to work. (Friday) afternoon, five o'clock, I catch a plane, come back. They paid me my salary and they paid my transportation.

WN: That's for one day? Monday to . . .

GK: Weekend. I worked Monday through Friday, and I came home Friday. And Friday evening, Saturday, Sunday. Monday, I go back to work. That was a good deal. I mean, really, they treated me like I was—they gave me subsistence. During the week I stayed with my daughter. They gave me subsistence I would have to pay the hotel, I gave it all to my daughter. Because I was eating meals at my daughter's place, spending time with her. So I'd pay her the subsistence. I was making out like a bandit.

(Laughter)

WN: Not bad.

GK: Not bad, yeah? So, I spent a couple of years, I guess, with them, until it got to the point where they didn't have much work. They were bidding for navy jobs, and one of the navy requirements was to have an inspector on the job to see that it was done properly. So knowing me, I worked in the shipyard, I worked as an planning estimator, I had good reputation. They needed me for my knowledge, what I was, integrity and all that. So, they accepted me. They said, "Kahanu, okay, we'll take him. We'll accept him as an inspector." So when the jobs were done, I would check it out, certify it as being okay, and they would accept it. So instead of them hiring an inspector, they made the

company hire the inspector and made the company ensure that the job was properly done, which made sense, right? You doing the job, you supposed to guarantee the job, you want to see that it is done properly. So I was inspector for a number of years. Basically, just fat, dumb, and happy.

(Laughter)

WN: We're at the point now where we're going to ask you some questions about looking back at your life. How would you evaluate your life? Anything you would have done differently?

GK: I tell you, really, I may have wanted to go on to college. But at that time, if they had maybe an advisor at school, at Kamehameha at that time to advise people (planning on) going to college, but I never had anybody to advise me one way. Like I say, I did have the opportunity. I was offered scholarship to California. No one told me, "We'd give me so much scholarships, living expenses," at that time. So, I decided not to go. I sometimes think about it. Then, I think, my classmates went into the war, and two of my very good friends and top students, there were three of us that were the top of the class and two of them got killed. So I'm thinking, "Well, you know, Kahanu, you're lucky. You could have gone in the service and been killed." However, I did go through the service, I did my share, repairing ships, which I think was very important for the war effort.

Let me cite you an example right now, and maybe this situation applies. My son-in-law was working, had a job that he was working for his brother and this was making countertops out of polyester, that kind of stuff. I went down and visited the shop one day. I came back and I told my wife—they were down two blocks away from where we lived—and I told my wife, he's going to die inside of a couple of years. He's down there breathing all that stuff. I said, "In the shipyard, we wouldn't inhale that. That's criminal."

So she said, "What are you going to do about it?"

So one day I got a hold of my son-in-law and I told him, "You know, Richard, you working down there is not the greatest. I said, "I tell you what, you go to Farrington High School, you learn all the math you can, take all the classes, get the top. And then when you're finished, you let me know, and I try to get you into an apprenticeship program at the shipyard."

So, he says, "Okay," so he did it.

When he got through, I talked to him and told him, "You got to pass the exam. If you pass the exam, then I can see what I can do." And I was friendly with all the echelon administration and all of that. So he took the exam and he came pretty near the top. I



was a ship fitter and a welder, that's really tough. Heavy metals, pounding, and everything. I mean, rough, you down in the bilges. I said, "You don't want to do that. You take sheet metal subject, vocation. Go into the sheet metal trade because you getting good blueprint reading that you can use when you're home, construction, and it's light metal, it's clean, it's nice." So he did. He went through, and I advised him all through the period that I was there, and so he was a mechanic. He's kind of head in the shop now.

But in the meantime, my grandson graduates from high school, and he's going to a vocational school. He doesn't want to go school anymore. So he went to vocational and he's got into welding. And Pearl Harbor, instead of having their own apprenticeship program, they working with the state in vocational areas, and they taking people who go to school and come to the shipyard.

So the other day—my son does my taxes. My son does his sister's taxes, too, and his nephew's taxes. So the other day I ask my daughter, Kehau—she graduated from UH [University of Hawai'i] as a teacher—and I says, "Kehau, your brother do your taxes?"

"Yes. And he did Kealoha's taxes, too."

Said, "You know that kid, Richard tells me Kealoha made more money than you made, and he's only an apprentice." He made \$32,000 as a worker, as a welder. And the mother is teaching school and been through the whole program, she's got her master's degree and everything.

She says, "Dad, it's crazy. This guy makes more money than I do. I went through all that school, university, and the whole thing."

So, coming back to what I'm saying, at that time, I could have maybe gone to university, but I looked at these guys. When they came out at that time, they ended up firemen or policemen. There were no jobs out here. Moses, who played football, was a policeman, and even Arthur Harris, those guys, finished university, never even finish, ended up being policeman. I had an uncle who was a policeman who wanted me to be a policeman, and I wasn't made to be a policeman. I didn't figure I had the whatever to be a policeman.

But, if you ask me again, in my life, I was working in the shipyard. Like I said, the opportunities were there. I started as a journeyman, I went from a welder and ship fitter—which is like a carpenter, you'd be putting steel together—and then I became a supervisor, and then I went to planning and estimating. I changed to another, it came out after the war. This guy [Robert] McNamara was one of the Ford Motor Company "Whiz Kids" that were in the war, and after the war they wondered how come we were able to do things the way we did. You know, we were the experts. We knew what we

were doing, repairing ships. In fact, we did a lot of things that were contrary to standard practice. Like they used to do a lot of riveting. When the war broke out, we had to do it as quickly as possible. So we converted a lot to welding. And we the guys who had to make the decision. We never had brass telling us, "You got to do this, you got to do that." The logical thing to do, we got to get these ships out.

Like I was watching the Pearl Harbor episode the other night and the Midway Battle, they brought the damaged Yorktown into Pearl Harbor. Nimitz came down. "How long will it take the shipyard to repair?"

"Well, the best we can do, two weeks."

"Got to do better than that."

"Ten days."

"No, I want it out tomorrow."

They were going to fight the Battle of Midway. Nimitz stood at the dock, he says, "I want it out tomorrow if possible."

Well, it took us three days and you know what we had to do, eh? Just make it watertight. Patch it up. We didn't do a standard repair job. We didn't have the time. But you know, you could do jobs in different manners and still meet the requirement. And the requirement was to make it watertight so the ship could sail out of there. So a lot of it, we just slapped a piece of plate on, just welded around, never welded the inside because these things got to get out of here. You know, really.

So the Japanese lost the war at Midway because they were foolish to try to attempt to fight us at Midway because we had a land base, Midway Island. They had planes on it and everything, plus, we had three carriers out there, too. We had the *Lexington*, the *Enterprise*, and the *Yorktown*. We fought the Japanese, I don't know how many carriers they had, I think they had about five carriers out there. I think we sank four of them. They lost because of that, the turning point of the war.

But, again, I say, we did what we could, and I was treated very nicely in my years at Pearl Harbor. Today, people don't get that treatment. You hear people working different companies, and they merge with another company, they sell the darn company, and everybody gets laid off and stuff. I mean, how sad. But here we are, I went through, in between I had to make so-called tough decisions, but that's part of life. You can't have everything all on a silver platter. The thing to do is, we human beings have to do the right thing, make the right decisions.

Some people, they are envious of the person next door, what they have and everything. I was brought up, don't be envious of anybody. You go out and you earn. You do your work, you put your effort in, so that when you get it you deserve it, you happy. You haven't caused any. . . . Hawaiian style, *ho'oponopono*, don't make any enemies. Get everybody to feel like you one and you're not competing with anybody. You know, life is competition, but you do it in your own way. I mean, let's face it, I tell my kids, "You go out there, you study. Nobody can take away what you have up here. What you have up here, God gave you, and you make the most out of it."

So, again, I went through the service, I went to Kamehameha, I was born amongst different nationalities, and I loved all my friends that I grew up with. I went to school, and I say I don't think I'd be here today if it wasn't for Kamehameha. I look at kids who have the opportunity today to go to Kamehameha. I tell them, "Take advantage. One day when you finish and you out there, then you going look back, and you may be sorry. It's too late. You don't want to be sorry, you want to be happy, I did the right thing." I mean, really.

WN: Good place to end. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **HUI PANALĀ'AU: Hawaiian Colonists in the Pacific, 1935–1942**

**Center for Oral History  
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